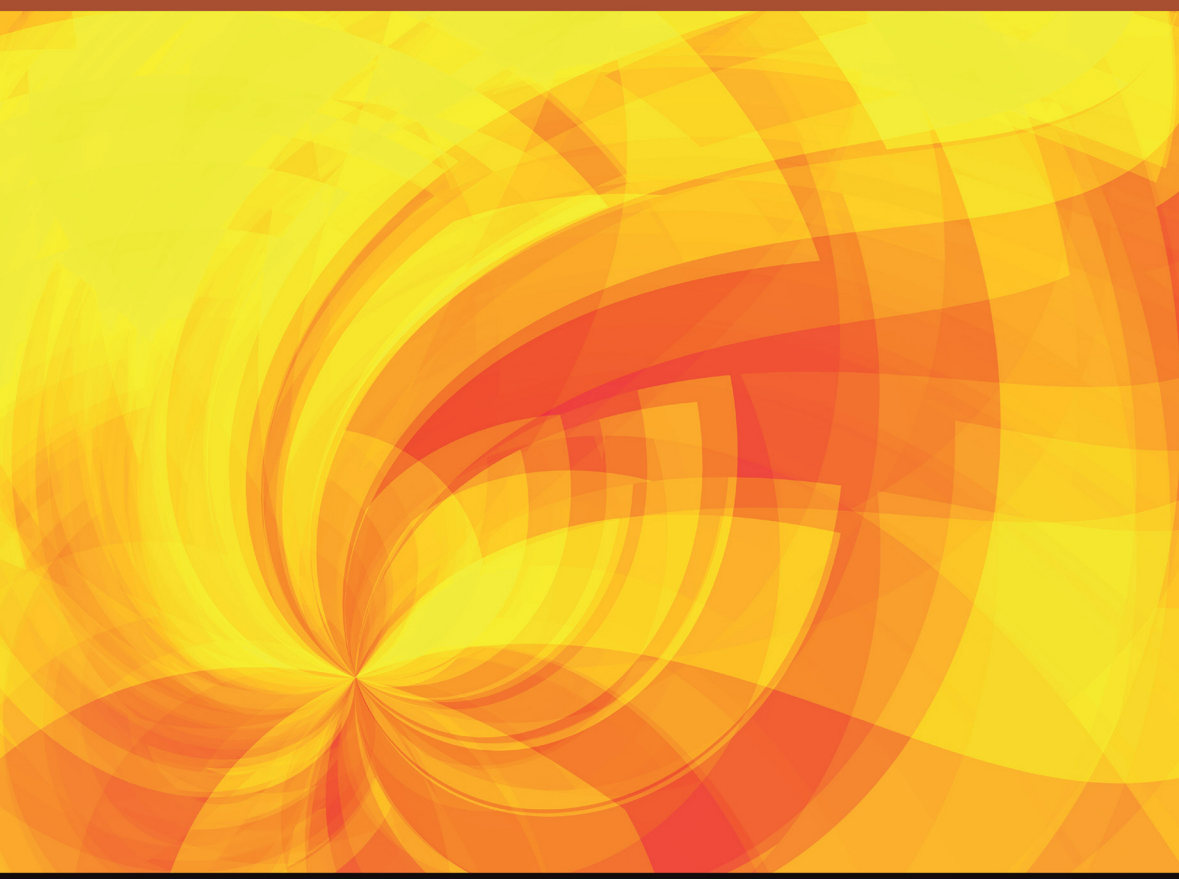
RESEARCHING STYLISTICS

A Student Guide



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ROUTLEDGE

RESEARCHING STYLISTICS

Researching Stylistics: A Student Guide explores key topics in literary and non-literary stylistics, examining the multiple ways in which students can undertake research in this discipline. Inherently practical and reader-friendly in focus, the book not only acts as a guide to key elements of the research process but also provides a useful overview of core knowledge and successful research projects in stylistics.

The book provides an overview of stylistics as a discipline, identifying its core principles and working parameters. It outlines, in a clear and systematic way, the design stages and practical considerations needed to plan for and undertake research. Reflecting the latest thinking in contemporary stylistics, the book demonstrates how various methods can be applied to study a range of different text types. The practical activity of 'doing' stylistics and key examples from existing research are emphasised so that readers will be confident in their ability to apply their knowledge to their own working contexts.

This is an essential text for advanced students and researchers working in stylistics and discourse analysis, and those working in interdisciplinary spaces who would be interested in exploring how stylistics can support their work.

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PREFACE

This book is written by members of the Aston Stylistics Research Centre at Aston University, UK. Much of what we have written here has been used by our students at Aston University across various modules in different areas of stylistics. We are grateful to all of our students for choosing to study stylistics and for all their questions and feedback that have found their way into our book.

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PART I

Introduction to Researching Stylistics

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1

WHAT IS STYLISTICS?

In this chapter, we will consider

- **what the main principles of stylistics are;**
- **what we mean by style;**
- **why stylistics is useful for literary analysis;**
- **where to situate yourself as a researcher of stylistics within the context of an evolving and dynamic discipline.**

1.1 Introduction

Have you ever wondered why, despite their intrinsic connection, language and literature are sometimes treated as different disciplines?

Studying the former would make you a linguist: someone who scientifically examines the structural, phonological, semantic, lexical, or grammatical building blocks of language. As a discipline, linguistics provides the tools to understand how language works, and its many branches analyse the use of language in more specific areas. Sociolinguistics, for instance, refers to the study of language in social use; psycholinguistics considers the psychology of language; neurolinguistics explores how the human brain controls language comprehension, production, and acquisition; in computational linguistics, mathematical models are used to understand how computers interact with, analyse and process natural language; applied linguistics investigates (and usually offers evidence-based solutions to) language-related problems in everyday life. In each case, the broad idea is to use linguistic tools and methods to analyse how language *functions*, often with a focus on 'real life' language too.

On the other hand, you might describe yourself as a literary theorist or critic if you looked exclusively at literary texts; that is, to say, constructed or created texts

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rather than 'natural' language, per se. In this case, the focus is on the principles, theories, and philosophy of analysing and, more specifically, interpreting literature. Literary critics do so by considering how context influences the act of creation by incorporating, for example, politics, culture, gender, authorship, materialism, and so on. To name but a few examples, Marxist theory examines how literature connects to and reflects socio-economic conditions; feminist literary criticism uses the principles of feminist ideology to critique texts; postcolonial theory considers the cultural, historical, political, and economic consequences of imperialism and colonialism; critical race theory examines racial bias by exploring the relationships between social constructions of race and ethnicity, politics, and media.

We should say that, in many ways, these are superficial differences. Although linguists tend to pay more attention to the mechanics of language, literary critics use broadly the same metaphorical toolkit to enable their critical interpretations. Furthermore, while literary criticism prioritises interpretation, it would be wrong to say that linguists offer no kind of interpretation themselves when analysing language in use. Perhaps, instead, it is the manner of that interpretation which, at least nominally, provides the starkest difference. Historically, some literary critics have been suspicious of linguistic analysis as they believe 'it is too "objective" and runs the risk of destroying the sensitivity of response that readers need' (Wales 2011: 252). The question of objectivity vs. subjectivity in (literary) analysis and where the boundary may lie between language and literature in the first place have long been hot topics for analysts who wish to study both. Mick Short, a prominent stylistician, commented on the perceived difficulties of straddling the border between the two disciplines:

> [S]tyltistics can sometimes look like either linguistics or literary criticism, depending upon where you are standing when you are looking at it. So, some of my literary critical colleagues sometimes accuse me of being an unfeeling linguist, saying that my analyses of poems, say, are too analytical, being too full of linguistic jargon and leaving insufficient room for personal preference on the part of the reader. My linguist colleagues, on the other hand, say that I am no linguist at all, but a critic in disguise, who cannot make his descriptions of language precise enough to count as real linguistics. They think that I leave too much to intuition and that I am not analytical enough. I think I've got the mix just right, of course!
>
> *(Short 1996: 1)*

In its most simplistic terms, stylistics is the bridge between language and literature. It is a linguistic discipline which takes the same kind of scientific, methodological approach to studying 'language in use' as the fields outlined earlier, but it predominantly, though not exclusively, explores the language in and of literature. For this reason, you may also hear it being called literary linguistics as the term stylistics refers more broadly to the study of style (see Section 1.2) in spoken and

written language and is therefore not necessarily limited to literary language, as we demonstrate throughout this volume. However, rather than just describing language use in literature, stylistics takes a leaf out of the literary critic's book and provides 'a method of textual interpretation in which primacy of place is assigned to language' (Simpson 2014: 3).

For stylisticians – those who research stylistics – the linguistic building blocks that form a text reveal significant information about the purpose and function of that text which, in turn, opens the door to its interpretation. 'While linguistic features do not of themselves constitute a text's "meaning", an account of linguistic features nonetheless serves to ground a stylistic interpretation and to help explain why, for the analyst, certain types of meaning are possible' (Simpson 2014: 3). After all, if we acknowledge the interpretive potential of a particular word, phrase, punctuation mark, or syntactical structure that has been included in a text for whatever reason, then we can also analyse 'the choices and patterns made by an author as a way of exploring how readers might respond and how they might form interpretations' (Giovanelli and Mason 2018: vii). This feeds into the 'dual intensive commitment' (Giovanelli 2026) of modern stylistics which goes beyond just examining the language of a text to also considering its interpretative effects on readers, thus paving the way for more holistic textual analysis. It should therefore be noted that stylisticians are not exclusively interested in *what* a text means, but also *how* and *why* that meaning is created. As explained by Leech and Short in their seminal *Style in Fiction* (2007 [1981]: 11), a linguist might ask '*Why* does the author here choose this form of expression?' while a literary critic questions '*How* is such-and-such an aesthetic effect achieved through language?' A stylistician brings both angles together in order 'to relate the critic's concern of aesthetic appreciation with the linguist's concern of linguistic description' (Leech and Short 2007: 11), therein essentially providing an evidence-informed exploration of aesthetic interpretation and effect.

In this way, stylistic analysis attempts to be objective rather than relying solely on impressionism. Underpinning this are three core principles for research in stylistics, commonly referred to as the three Rs (Simpson 2014: 4):

- Stylistic analysis should be *rigorous* (it is based on a clear model, framework or method of linguistic analysis)
- Stylistic analysis should be *retrievable* (it is outlined clearly and uses accepted definitions of common terminology)
- Stylistic analysis should be *replicable* (it is explained in a transparent way so that others could follow the method, repeat the analysis and arrive at the same result)

These principles support a more careful and scientific approach to textual analysis, but stylistics nevertheless retains the inherently evaluative practices of literary study in addition to an awareness of (and appreciation for) the aesthetic properties

of the text being analysed. In doing so, it essentially offers a 'best of both worlds' approach that ultimately provides a more integrated view of language and literature. Rather than being methodologically incongruous, the potential eclecticism of stylistics is arguably one of the discipline's greatest strengths – perhaps even a central tenet – as stylisticians regularly show a willingness to draw on what works best.

> There has very much been a sense among stylisticians that if a particular linguistic model can contribute some insight to the literary text in hand, then it is worth pursuing. Stylisticians are sometimes wed closely to particular linguistic models or approaches, but more often than not will adapt frameworks from across the range of available linguistic scholarship. Equally, stylisticians generally do not seem to feel themselves tied to a particular literary historical period or mode, as literary critics tend to organise themselves both intellectually and institutionally.
> *(Stockwell and Whiteley 2014: 6)*

This, Stockwell and Whiteley argue, brings 'intellectual agility' and an 'artisanal edge' to the field of stylistics that also allows work to proceed 'on a practical basis, without being over-anxious about theoretical or philosophical issues' (2014: 6). We invite you to keep this in mind as you embark on your own research in stylistics. Stylistics can allow you to be somewhat flexible in your approach to textual analysis (whether literary or not) as you pick from an ever-expanding metaphorical stylistic 'toolkit' (Wales 2014) and draw on frameworks, concepts and terms from a range of related disciplines. Indeed, interdisciplinarity is at the heart of stylistics as, even before taking influence and inspiration from other fields, it fundamentally, and immediately, brings together language/linguistics and literature/literary criticism. When starting your research in stylistics, however, this may be a daunting prospect. While there are a plethora of exemplary resources to draw from and models to follow, as shall be demonstrated throughout this book, finding your specific angle of analysis can take time, especially when it seems like the stylistic world is your oyster! Chapter 2 will take you through some of the practical aspects of how to do this, and we encourage you to think critically, carefully and creatively about what you're trying to research and why. This will help pin down your methodological approach while still giving you room to manoeuvre within or between different subdisciplines, some of which are discussed in Section 1.3. Throughout the process, you can continually reach into the stylistic toolkit and draw on foregrounding, speech acts, metaphor theory, deixis, iconicity, verbal aspect, transitivity, and so on and so forth to ground your analysis in the building blocks of (literary) language.

Remember: stylistics provides a more holistic, integrated analysis that combines the best practices of both linguistic study and literary theory. Rather than asserting subjective interpretations based on vague hunches or idiosyncratic readings of a text, ground your conclusions in linguistic evidence from that text. At the same time, don't just objectively describe the language that is being used; you may want to show off your linguistic knowledge, but you still need to link the textual

evidence to some kind of literary interpretation that explains how and why meaning is created. Following a clear framework or model is usually a good way to avoid going too far one way or the other, as it provides a scaffold through which to explore, structure, and develop your linguistic analysis and literary interpretation simultaneously. Consequently, you end up with an analysis that is methodologically sound, grounded in textual evidence and holistically linked to interpretive effect(s) as you explain what, why and how meaning is created through language. In other words, you have research which is rigorous, retrievable, and replicable. Congratulations, you're doing stylistics.

1.2 What do we mean by 'style'?

We mentioned earlier that stylistics it the study of style. Style can be viewed and interpreted in a variety of ways. A useful starting point is the definition given by Katie Wales in her *Dictionary of Stylistics* (2011: 397):

> At its simplest, style refers to the perceived distinctive manner of expression in writing or speaking, just as there is a perceived manner of doing things, like playing squash or painting. We might talk of someone writing in an 'ornate style' or speaking in a 'comic style'. For some people, as for Aristotle, style has evaluative connotations: style can be 'good' or 'bad'.

Similarly, Leech and Short (2007: 9) state that, in its most general interpretation, style 'refers to the way in which language is used in a given context, by a given person, for a given purpose, and so on'. An obvious implication of both definitions is that style can vary significantly, with language choices often being context-sensitive. This can result in different styles being used in different situations to suit a specific audience, purpose or emphasis. We may also link this to 'register', a term that is used to denote the archetypal variation in linguistic features within different language situations, e.g. news reports, advertising, legal documents, sports commentary, etc. When considering literature, we might think about how style changes between texts, media, genres, or periods. At the same time, individual people inevitably use language in idiosyncratic ways and therefore produce different styles in and of themselves. In spoken language, accent or dialect is a common form of stylistic variation, but we can also think about it in terms of formality, social grouping, education and plain old personal choice in both written and verbal communication. Returning to literary language, we might think of repeated stylistic choices commonly associated with particular authors, such as Jane Austen's sardonic wit, James Joyce's aversion to punctuation, or Mark Twain's use of eye dialect.

Style can thus be considered at an individual level in the sense of the linguistic habits of a particular writer or communicator all the way to broader patterns within a genre, time period or school of writing. While style may be adapted for different situations (also called style-shifting), the language user/creator must make a conscious

choice to pick a certain word, structure or pattern to convey meaning, tone or identity within a particular context. In each case, therefore, style is distinctive or characteristic in some way based on the specific linguistic features being used, as well as their distribution and patterning. Ultimately, then, we can think of style as 'the linguistic characteristics of a particular text' (Leech and Short 2007: 11).

Stylistics helps us study these characteristics, combining the linguistic description of style(s) with the interpretive effect(s) that arise from it. Primarily, stylisticians identify and analyse patterns of language in order to explore how and why meaning or effect is created, and how readers are primed and positioned to respond to textual prompts. This can raise a few questions, however, particularly in terms of author intentionality. In the first chapter of *English Literary Stylistics*, Christiana Gregoriou reflects on her own experience as a student of stylistics when first grappling with the issue of style.

> I wondered whether style elements were consciously or unconsciously 'inserted' by the writer. In other words, to what extent are writers aware of their linguistic choices? […] Surely one's choices are determined by a number of external as well as internal requirements, and style is not merely a choice between variant items or structures. Are there not a number of norms (say, generic features) that writers often need to conform to when producing literary texts? For instance, crime writers are, at least to some extent, restricted by the need for them to employ such characters as criminal(s), victim(s) and detectives(s), not to mention an element of mystery, a surprise ending and so on. Do these choices have anything to do with their style, the authors' idiosyncratic linguistic habits? I also contemplated whether style is about deviation or the conforming to linguistic norms. Is deviation itself a factor in determining style?
>
> *(Gregoriou 2009: 2)*

These are sensible questions with perhaps less than easy answers. Some authors, for example, are more aware than others about the linguistic nature of their writing style. Anecdotally, Gregoriou mentions meeting James Patterson, a crime fiction writer, and asking whether he had consciously used crime-related conceptual metaphors such as A CRIMINAL IS A MACHINE and A CRIMINAL IS AN ANIMAL when portraying the mind of the protagonist in his *Alex Cross* novels; unsurprisingly he had not. On the other hand, one of the authors of this handbook, Ella Wydrzynska, received an immensely gratifying email from Pseudonymous Bosch, the focal author of her Master's dissertation, explaining that the 'stylistic tics and quirks that you outline were fully conscious, deliberate choices, and were intended to have exactly the effects you describe' (personal communication). The extent to which authors are aware of their 'stylistic tics and quirks' can therefore vary greatly and, to be safe, it's usually better to avoid claims of author intentionality as much as possible; instead, prioritise the language in the text and the *what*, *how,* and *why* of its interpretive effect(s). In doing so, you can also consider what other possible choices were available and what effect

has been created or readerly response prompted by a particular word being selected over another, for example. Of course, as Gregoriou mentions, we can't just treat style as a checklist of variables which authors choose between, especially if there are external or generic factors to take into account too. Rather, aim to rationalise the linguistic choices made in the context of their potential interpretative effects, thereby integrating linguistic description with aesthetic impact.

Gregoriou ultimately surmises that 'style is generated by an interaction between on one hand, a text's sum of deviations from recognisable norms, and on the other, the extent to which it conforms to these norms' (2009: 2). This is a definition which we are happy to follow as a starting point for stylistic analysis. It should be said that stylisticians have a tendency to focus on foregrounded features – that is, what stands out the most – so asking oneself *why* a particular feature or pattern seems to be particularly noticeable is a good place to start, especially when considering how it functions within a text and what effect it subsequently has on the reader.

1.3 Key developments

As a discipline, stylistics can effectively be traced back to the study of rhetoric and poetics in Ancient Greece and Rome (Burke 2023). In the 4th century BCE, Aristotle is thought to have written the first book-length work on critical theory in the ancient Hellenic world. In this, he outlined three theoretical facets of classical poetics:

- Mimesis: Art is an imitation of nature so can recreate or improve reality (the term is based on one of Plato's two types of narration: 'mimesis' is when an author speaks in the voice of their characters, while in 'diegesis' an author uses their own voice)
- Catharsis: Art can be used to cleanse or release strong emotions, especially fear and pity
- Plot structure: This includes the notions of *hamartia* (a mistake, error or tragic flaw), *peripetia* (a reversal or circumstance or change of fortune) and *anagnorisis* (an act of recognition, often as a result of a character's *hamartia*)

Unlike Aristotle, the Roman poet Horace, composing in the 1st century BCE, concentrated less on plot and more on character. He believed that protagonists should model what it is to be a morally and ethically good person and essentially introduced to poetics the notion of 'decorum'. In other words, everything in poetry from the subject matter to the form and tone, to the micro-level linguistic features like words and meter should fit together in a consistent, congruent, and appropriate manner. A few centuries later, Longinus is traditionally credited with creating *On the Sublime* which outlines the aesthetics and effects of 'good' writing and the different sources of poetic sublimity which can transport audiences to a state of bliss. In doing so, *On the Sublime* takes inspiration from the teachings of Roman rhetorical schools and pays close attention to 'grand style', one of the three levels of style in classical rhetoric.

It quickly becomes clear when studying classical poetics just how many ideas and concepts connect to or overtly rely on rhetoric. It is, therefore, 'perhaps fair to say that rhetoric, with its inherent link to style, is more important to modern day stylistics than poetics' (Burke 2023: 12). There are a number of basic principles which underpin classical rhetoric, the most important of which is its five canons which support the creation of persuasive speech:

- Invention (coming up with the materials for developing and refining an argument)
- Arrangement (ordering the discourse for greatest effect)
- Style (saying or writing things in a persuasive manner, paying close attention to correctness, clarity and appropriateness)
- Memory (learning and memorising the argument)
- Delivery (the act of presenting the argument, including gestures, pronunciation, tone, and pace)

In addition to the five canons, three core genres of persuasive discourse are pivotal to understanding classical rhetoric. These are forensic or judicial oratory (the rhetoric of the law courts with a focus on accusation and defence about past events), deliberative or political rhetoric (the rhetoric of the political arena in which future events are emphatically addressed), and epideictic or ceremonial oratory (the rhetoric of praise or blame, primarily with reference to the present time).

Although only a whistle-stop tour of classical poetics and rhetoric, you should be able to see that many of the core theories and principles have had considerable influence on stylistics as we know it today; some elements such as style, structure and audience impact basically have direct counterparts in modern stylistics. Many of the most prominent works in stylistics are grounded in rhetoric, yet '[i]n the past thirty years or so there has been little mention of rhetoric in the stylistics classroom, or in the research conducted by stylisticians' (Burke 2023: 28). Historical overviews of the field written in that same time frame tend to begin in the 20th century with Russian formalism and the work of Roman Jakobson, a pioneer of structuralism. That is not to say that formalism and structuralism aren't important developments, but rather that the theoretical work in those areas didn't spring to life out of nowhere; instead, they draw heavily on both poetics and rhetoric. We see this clearly when reviewing the past 100 or so years in stylistic development.

> Stylistics as a movement within linguistics was the product of a number of intellectual pursuits which converged in Middle- and Eastern-European philological circles in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Jena School of Romance Philology, led by Meyer-Lübke, trained two of the finest philologists involved in inaugurating the discipline of stylistics in Germany: Leo Spitzer (1948) and Karl Vossler (1932). The French linguist and student of Saussure, Charles Bally, extended Saussurean Structuralism to include in it a theory of style (1909). But by far the most significant influence on modern stylistics is the work of the Russian Formalists.
>
> *(Sotirova 2015a: 3)*

Building on a throughline of classical rhetoric, the theoretical foundations of modern stylistics were laid in the early 20th century by the Russian formalists and the Prague School of structuralists. As their name suggests, the formalists were particularly interested in the formal linguistic differences between poetic and non-poetic language or, putting it another way, the quantifiability of 'literariness'. That is, 'the assumption that an unchangeable literary essence [is] intrinsic to every literary phenomenon' (Steiner 1984: 114). There are, however, clear problems with trying to demarcate literary and non-literary language in this way. In particular, it risks viewing language use in binary terms with no acknowledgement for the many literary works written in starkly non-poetic language or the countless non-literary texts which utilise aesthetically poetic phrasing. In fact, if you ask a modern stylistician whether 'literariness' or 'literary style' exists, they're most likely going to respond with a resounding no. After all, style is based on language being distinctive and/or characteristic in some way, and 'there exists no feature or pattern of language which is inherently or exclusively "literary" in all contexts' (Simpson 2014: 106). Modern stylistics thus proves useful in circumventing the inherently problematic nature of 'literariness' by prioritising the linguistic study of style in *any* text, surpassing the conventional parameters of literature in doing so.

Nevertheless, it was under the influence of formalism that structuralism was born. Reaching a peak in the 1960s, structuralism centred less on the evaluation of individual texts (as per literary criticism) but rather on their structural patterns. One of its pioneering figures was Roman Jakobson – a co-founder of the Moscow Linguistic Circle who, after leaving Russia in 1920 and moving to Czechia, later co-founded the Prague School. Among other things, Jakobson developed a model of communication to show how language can be used to convey information, express emotions, establish social contact, and so on, as displayed in Figure 1.1. Jakobson argued that literary texts often focus on the message of the text – that is, the poetic function – and, showing his formalist roots, used this to study what constitutes 'literariness'.

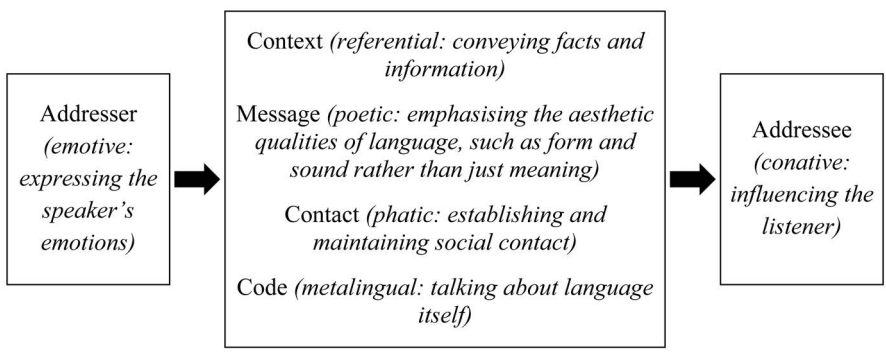
Addresser
(emotive: expressing the speaker's emotions)
Context (referential: conveying facts and information)
Message (poetic: emphasising the aesthetic qualities of language, such as form and sound rather than just meaning)
Contact (phatic: establishing and maintaining social contact)
Code (metalingual: talking about language itself)
Addressee
(conative: influencing the listener)

FIGURE 1.1 Jakobson's functions of language

Within the Prague School, discussions of 'literariness' paved the way for the notion of foregrounding. As mentioned previously in this chapter, foregrounding highlights the poetic function of language through its ability to deviate from or create textual patterns in relation to a linguistic norm. The term 'foregrounding' was established by Paul Garvin when translating the works of the Czech structuralists in the 1960s, but it was originally called 'actualisation' by its principal developer Jan Mukařovský. The idea of 'actualising' language also built on Viktor Šklovsky's work on 'defamiliarisation'. Šklovsky argued that everyday language gets automatised through familiarity and regular use, while the purpose of art (including literary texts) 'is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged' (1965 [1917]: 12). Foregrounding, especially when relying on linguistic deviation, highlights that which is 'unfamiliar' while also providing a metalanguage to identify rhetorical tropes and functions. This also prompted a move towards functionalism with critics being less interested in how the formal properties of language create meaning and more concerned with the way those properties are used pragmatically.

> The Prague School may have started as a formalist movement, where the emphasis in meaning making was mainly on the logical and semantic message/text, but the school and its members quickly became functionalists. Like formalism, functionalism is concerned with the text, but it is also interested in the role that context plays in the process of meaning making. In short, with the advent of functionalism in the Prague School there was a gradual move from text to context, from form to function, from semantics to pragmatics and from logic to rhetoric.
>
> *(Burke and Evers 2023: 42)*

This growing consideration of context in literary study is in keeping with stylistics' willingness to evolve and, where relevant, pull useful theories and frameworks from other disciplines. By the 1970s and 1980s, stylisticians were more consistently combining context-sensitive linguistic models with the more traditional historical and socio-cultural notions of context in literary criticism. A key methodological advancement in this regard was the adoption of Michael Halliday's functional model of language within stylistic research–exemplified in his seminal analysis of transitivity patterns in William Golding's *The Inheritors* (Halliday 1971)–and his systemic functional grammar proved a popular way of connecting grammatical structures with meaning-making.

The modern stylistic toolkit likewise pulls from sociolinguistics, discourse studies and pragmatic theories, enabling us to investigate participant relations, politeness, and communicative interactions in literary texts (and further afield). Work in stylistics has also drawn on sociology, cultural studies and critical discourse analysis (see Fairclough 1995) to enhance analyses of both spoken and written

language. A particularly prevalent development has been the incorporation of cognition, emotion and knowledge, with the subdisciplines of cognitive stylistics (see Semino and Culpeper 2002) and cognitive poetics (Stockwell 2020) introducing concepts, methods, frameworks and tools from cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics; this is explored further in Chapter 4. While stylistics has long been considered reader-centred through its dual intensive commitment of analysing the linguistic features of a text alongside its interpretative effects, the cognitive turn arguably foregrounds the mind of the reader even more explicitly by considering how the audience's knowledge, memories, motivations and emotions interact with language to generate meaning(s). Of arguably equal note and prevalence is corpus stylistics, a methodological development relating to the use of computational software to facilitate the identification and examination of linguistic patterns across large language sets. Maintaining the trademark eclecticism of stylistics, corpus approaches have been thoroughly integrated into other areas of stylistic enquiry, as outlined in Chapter 6.

We could go on and on about the different branches of stylistics or countless areas to which stylistic analysis has already been competently applied. With its inherent interdisciplinarity and intellectual agility, it is no surprise that stylistics exists as a dynamic discipline which is constantly evolving. Technological developments and an interest in empiricism are foremost in our minds when thinking about the current status of contemporary stylistics, but who knows what will have been added to the metaphorical toolkit within the next 10 years. After all, stylisticians are always open to trying new ideas and methods and drawing on a range of different disciplinary approaches. Perhaps you, holding this book in your hands, will be the next mind to revolutionise the field or develop an entirely new branch of research in stylistics.

1.4 What can stylistics bring to literary analysis?

The previous sections in this chapter sing the praises of stylistics and we hope, by this point, that you are on board with the value, strengths, and theoretical principles of the discipline. Furthermore, given that this book is quite literally titled *Researching Stylistics*, it's probably a safe bet that you must be at least marginally interested in doing exactly that. Still, it would be useful to give a small taste of what stylistics can bring to literary analysis before you proceed with the rest of this handbook. We will use 'The Fugitives' by Percy Bysshe Shelley as a case study in this, with the first section of the poem printed below.

The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing—
Away!

> The whirlwind is rolling,
> The thunder is tolling,
> The forest is swinging,
> The minster bells ringing—
> Come away!
>
> The Earth is like Ocean,
> Wreck-strewn and in motion:
> Bird, beast, man and worm
> Have crept out of the storm—
> Come away!
>
> *(Shelley 2003 [1824])*

A critical commentary accompanies the poem in an edited collection of Shelley's manuscripts (Reiman and O'Neill 1997). In that commentary, Donald H. Reiman – a literary critic, English Professor and acclaimed Shelley scholar – says the following:

> [S]ome masterful technical aspects of the finished poem in [the Rosenbach Museum's holograph of the poem] – e.g. its short lines and rapid meter and its breathless pace, partly achieved by the exclusive use of the present tense – are beautifully fitted to the lovers' dramatic escape into the night[.] […] Though life rather than literature thus provided the spark that led to the writing of these two elopement poems, the form PBS chose for 'The waters are flashing' – its elemental diction, its short, clipped, rapidly spoken lines, and its use of the present tense throughout – may have developed in reaction to Keats's 'The Eve of St. Agnes'[.]
>
> *(Reiman and O'Neill 1997: 110–111)*

Upon first reading, there is a great deal of sense in Reiman's evaluation. The short lines, some of which are cut off quickly, and paratactic listing of clauses force the reader to rush through the poem. This mirrors the speed with which the central couple are fleeing and symbolises their frantic excitement as they elope. While it's fair to say that some of the assertions made are rather subjective or overly based on Reiman claiming to read Shelley's mind (for instance when he states that the poem rekindles the early emotions of Shelley's own marriage), there is at least an attempt to connect the critical interpretations with the text itself.

However, Reiman makes a mistake when claiming that the poem's breathless pace is achieved through 'the exclusive use of the present tense'. For one thing, the poem definitely includes other tenses; in the section printed above, 'have crept' is an example of the present perfect, while elsewhere in the poem 'shouted

he', 'she cried', and 'the red cannon flashed' are in the simple past. Looking exclusively at the opening of the poem, it is true that the '[to be] + [-ing verb]' structure constitutes the present tense. However, using the stylistic toolkit, we can pin this down further and identify it as the present *progressive* instead. The key difference here is between *tense* – a grammatical category in which verb phrases undergo morphological changes to express relation to time – and *aspect* – a different grammatical category which allows verbs to be viewed in relation to the temporal constraints of an activity or event. Crucially, tense tells you when something happened while aspect tells you whether that activity is still ongoing or not. In the case of 'The Fugitives', the breathless pace that Reiman identifies is not a result of the present tense being used but, more accurately, the present progressive. The progressive makes it seem like the action is ongoing and therefore places the eloping couple (and the reader) in the midst of the flashing waters, the glancing lightnings, and tolling thunder. The action feels like it's happening *now* and thus feels spontaneous, as if we genuinely don't know what happens next until we experience it in real time. Furthermore, the prevalent use of definite articles (e.g. 'the waters', 'the white hail', 'the whirlwind', 'the minster bells', etc.) adds to the feeling of immersion in the world of the text as it signifies familiarisation with specific items or objects. The imperatives 'Away' and 'Come away' in this opening section imply a communicative situation in which instructions are being given; this, again, conveys a sense of urgency which adds to the overall breathlessness.

Although Reiman's initial interpretation was valid, supplementing the literary-critical evaluation with linguistic description provides a more thorough reading of the text. Glossing over the demonstrably false claim that only the present tense is used, the addition of verbal aspect strengthens the overall analysis by grounding the aesthetic interpretation in textual evidence. Discussing tense is something that pretty much any language user can do, but accurately identifying verbal aspect possibly requires more comprehensive linguistic knowledge. In this way, we come full circle to reiterate that stylistic analysis should combine the best practices of *both* language and literature.

1.5 How to use this book

This book is designed to help you think about possible research topics in stylistics and ways in which you might undertake them. We want to encourage you to explore your own interests, generate data to analyse, and be confident in writing up and presenting your findings.

This book is organised in the following way. This chapter and Chapter 2 (*Beginning Your Research: Design, Data, Methods*) form Part I and are designed to provide a platform for the rest of the book. Chapter 2 specifically leads you through the initial stages of planning a project in stylistics. In the first half, you will explore

key choices related to research design, from the selection of extracts to choosing the right stylistic 'tool' for analysis. With reference to contemporary scholarship in cognitive stylistics, in particular, the second half of Chapter 2 will introduce you to different approaches to generating reader response data. Here we will outline how various types of reader data may support or extend text-based analyses and how both naturalistic (e.g. book group discussions, reader reviews) and experimental studies (e.g. post-reading questionnaires, think-aloud protocols, interviews) may be set up. The chapter ends by outlining various ethical questions and issues that you will need to consider for a project in stylistics.

Part II (*Topics in Stylistics*) contains five chapters that introduce you to important areas of research in stylistics. Each chapter provides an overview of key content together with practical examples of analyses and extended case studies of existing research, firstly to exemplify various methodological and theoretical approaches, but also to provide ideas for your own work. In each of these chapters we emphasise a practical focus on undertaking research in stylistics and provide some further reading recommendations to extend your understanding of content introduced in the chapter.

Chapter 3 (*Narratological Stylistics*) introduces you to the connection between stylistics and narratology, the study of narrative discourse. Building on the chronological overview of trends addressed in Chapter 1, it begins by outlining some of the key movements and theories that have influenced the study of literary style with a particular focus on formalism, structuralism and Gérard Genette's theories of diegesis. It then extends its discussion to highlight the useful similarities and differences between stylistics and narratology when studying texts. Chapter 4 (*Cognitive Stylistics*) draws attention to the influence of cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology on stylistic scholarship. The chapter introduces you to some key ideas in cognitive stylistics, explaining how these connect to and align with more general areas of stylistic study. Similarly, Chapter 5 (*Media Stylistics*) discusses how concepts and theories of media discourse can be used in the stylistic analysis of communication in technologically mediated contexts, including traditional media like TV and newspapers, as well as new and social media. The chapter highlights how different methodologies have been applied to media texts and the challenges and opportunities that different media texts present to analysis, including temporality, permanency, multimodality, and contextuality. Chapter 6 (*Corpus Stylistics*) is an introduction to how methods and principles from corpus linguistics can support stylistic analysis by using software to bring textual patterns, which might otherwise be difficult to detect, to the analyst's attention. Chapter 7 (*Educational Stylistics*) closes Part II of the book by examining the broad application of contemporary stylistics within educational contexts. This includes the use of stylistics as a pedagogical tool in the classroom; the teaching of reading, creative writing and grammar; and how stylistic frameworks can be used to explore classroom reading, classroom resources and educational policy.

1.6 Further reading

There are several handbooks on stylistics that will give you overviews of the field. *The Routledge Handbook of Stylistics* (Burke 2023), *The Cambridge Handbook of Stylistics* (Stockwell and Whiteley 2014), and *The Bloomsbury Companion to Stylistics* (Sotirova 2015b) all provide comprehensive discussion of the many branches of research in stylistics. For a foundational understanding of the stylistics toolkit, Simpson (2014) is an excellent starting place; we also recommend Giovanelli and Mason (2018) and Gibbons and Whiteley (2018), both of which offer a clear introduction to the key terms and frameworks in stylistics. For more tailored foci or just to see how stylistics works in practice, *Language and Literature* is the discipline's leading journal. Although we do not cover writing up your research in this book, you could consult Bailey (2021) and Ó Siochrú (2022) for general overviews of good practice in academic writing. You should also look at the numerous articles and chapters that we recommend throughout the remainder of this book as these will provide excellent models for your own work.

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2

BEGINNING YOUR RESEARCH

Design, Data, and Methods

In this chapter, we will consider

- **how to plan the initial stages of a project in stylistics;**
- **the different types of project design, and the key choices related to these research designs;**
- **how to generate reader response data to support or extend text-based analyses;**
- **ethical considerations and principles of best practice.**

2.1 Introduction

So, you are about to start a new stylistics research project. Where do you begin? Perhaps you have been asked to complete an assignment as part of a module or course, or perhaps this is something you are embarking on for an independent research project. Either way, the processes involved in the early stages require the same steps:

- Selecting a text, or an extract from a text, that will form the basis or underpin your analysis
- Choosing the right stylistic framework for your analysis
- Designing your research questions

Collectively, your reasons for making these choices become part of your overall 'research design'. It is important to have a strong justification for all these choices, and it is likely that you will need to critically reflect on them at some point when you're writing up. The decisions you make in these early stages will be influenced

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by the type of study you plan to carry out, and the specific research questions you propose to answer. Some common types of research designs in stylistics include:

Exploratory. Perhaps you are interested in investigating a new literary genre that has not been explored in detail before, or in testing the validity or effectiveness of a new framework. An exploratory project will involve looking into and developing hypotheses and research questions about an emerging area (e.g. *To explore the stylistic profile of the 'Romantasy' genre in contemporary fiction*). This type of research tends to be led by qualitative approaches and is likely to be a precursor to carrying out other types of projects.

Experimental. An experimental project design involves a researcher investigating the cause-and-effect relationship between two or more variables. These are likely to be initiated by a hypothesis about the nature of this relationship, e.g., *The switch of second person to third person narration in a text will impact on readers' emotional alignment with a character.* Such studies can incorporate different datasets (e.g., both text and reader data), and often require a researcher to manipulate some of the stylistic variables (e.g., through a text intervention study, which involves rewriting a text by changing one or more stylistic feature) and/or reading conditions (e.g., asking readers to read and re-read the same extract within a particular time frame).

Descriptive. A descriptive project tends to have more structured research questions than an exploratory design, but, unlike an experimental project, will not manipulate different textual or stylistic variables. Instead, descriptive projects will explore and outline existing textual patterns or relationships. These types of projects may have a thematic or effect-oriented focus (e.g., *How is unreliability created in a psychological thriller novel*?), or be led by an interest in a specific feature, genre or author (e.g., *An investigation of conceptual metaphors for characterisation in Charles Dickens' writing*).

Methodological. A methodological project in stylistics will focus on the evaluation or development a particular research approach or framework (e.g., *Redefining 'edgework' in deictic shift theory*). This type of project may include a review of the application of this framework in existing analyses, and/or suggest refining the model through illustrative analyses. Here, the text choices for analysis may be more eclectic, selected in service of supporting or modelling the arguments raised by the researcher.

Your choice of project type, as well as the specific research questions you have in place, will dictate the decisions you make for the steps listed above, as well as the order in which you follow these steps, as the next section will explore.

2.2 Choosing your text and framework

You may already have a text in mind that you would like to analyse, or perhaps you have been tasked with exploring a particular book or genre. Alternatively, you may have a specific framework you wish to apply, or a theoretical concept you plan to

investigate in more detail. The first of these can be described as the 'text way-in' method (Giovanelli and Harrison 2024), whereby the literary text or genre itself drives the other decisions you make for your research. If you are starting one of these types of projects, it is likely that you already have chosen a text, or type of text, for your analysis. In these cases, the first step is to re-read the text carefully to remind yourself of the salient narrative structures and literary themes, and your key interpretations or impressions of the language. In such projects, it's also a good idea to return to parts of the text that are especially significant or which you found particularly memorable. These extracts might be the beginning and ending (Rabinowitz 2002), or perhaps scenes of high suspense or action (Simpson 2014a), or of high emotion (Toolan 2009).

The second approach can be described as the 'framework way-in' method (Giovanelli and Harrison 2024), where you have already selected the stylistic feature you plan to investigate and/or the framework you plan to apply. If you have a particular interest in conceptual metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), for example, you will need to select a text for your analysis which uses metaphors in a significant or especially notable way. Experimental and methodological research designs will be driven by an interest in a particular stylistic feature or framework, whereas the other project types listed above can be designed around either the text or the framework as a starting point. Beginning with the framework or a specific linguistic feature first will give you more flexibility for your text choice. For some projects, selecting extracts from across a number of texts for your analysis may also be preferable. For example, if you plan to examine how a particular metaphor is used or reframed across a genre of fiction (e.g., *A survey of how the* ILLNESS IS WAR *metaphor is presented in Young Adult fiction*), identifying some illustrative examples may best address your research question.

As we discussed in Chapter 1, any project in stylistics requires researchers to carry out systematic, rigorous analysis, so when working with longer texts, such as lyric poems or novels, you will need to select specific extracts upon which to focus your analysis. Even if you are applying corpus methods, whereby whole texts can be coded for recurring linguistic choices and grammatical structures (see Chapter 6), selecting one or two key extracts for closer qualitative or contextualised analyses may still be necessary (e.g., Eberhardt 2017; Mahlberg and Stockwell 2015). It is best practice to include these extracts in your write-up of your project, either as extracts embedded in your discussion, or otherwise as clearly labelled excerpts included and cross-referenced within an appendix. If you are planning to publish your analysis, then you will also need to ensure that your inclusion of secondary materials follows the principles of fair use (see Section 2.6).

2.3 Selected project design case studies

The next section considers some example analyses (Sections 2.3.1–2.3.4) with different research designs. In each case study, the selection of text(s) and of

stylistic tool(s) are described and contextualised in relation to the project's research questions. The first two (Sections 2.3.1–2.3.2) include some reader data as part of the analysis. Ways of generating reader data, and the value of incorporating reader responses as part of your stylistic analysis, are introduced in more detail in Section 2.4. As you read through the following summaries, you might want to think about the researchers' choices of texts and extracts, and of how they have set about answering the questions posed. A key reflection, for any secondary reading, is to consider how the study might be replicated, developed or scaled up in future research.

2.3.1 Exploratory research: Reading race in contemporary fiction

Focusing on reading group responses to contemporary fiction, Lang's (2009a) paper, 'Reading race in *Small Island*', establishes its exploratory status from the outset. As Lang summarises, the paper aims to 'offer a model for other investigations into the effects of reading which, I argue, would be enhanced by considering what readers bring to – as well as take from – their textual encounters' (316). The exploratory remit of the project is also suggested in the broad scope of the overarching research question: 'Do texts act on readers – or readers on texts?' (317).

Reviewing the field, Lang claims that existing research in literary studies places an emphasis on the text acting on the reader, and overlooks or deprioritises the reader's own agency (316). The framework applied by Lang in this paper is Cook's (1994) theory of 'discourse deviation', which is premised on schema theory and the idea that readers bring their own background knowledge and individual interpretations (knowledge 'schemas') to the reading experience in order to more fully understand and conceptualise the information within a text. Departing from Cook's original work, however, Lang proposes to move 'beyond the theoretical to elucidate the schemata of actual readers' (318), while acknowledging that such an enterprise is 'no easy task' (318) due to the complex nature of 'interpretative variability' (318).

In order to assess the schemata of actual readers, Lang investigates a small reader response dataset gathered as part of a larger, multi-city community reading project called '*Small Island* Read', which took place in 2007. The novel *Small Island* (Levy 2004) was chosen for its connection to the 200th anniversary of the passing of the Slave Trade Abolition Bill, and copies of the book were freely given to residents of the participating cities. Lang references another study (Lang 2009b) where she examines a different dataset from the same project; in the case of that second study, readers' discussions of the novel post-reading. Through analysis of anonymous reader responses from an online survey, the evidence suggests that '*Small Island* did transform readers' understanding of the racism faced by Caribbean immigrants to Britain, and led them to rethink race relations in modern-day

Britain' (319), despite a reluctance, defensiveness and wariness from readers when the topic of ethnic communities was raised, apparent both in the responses to the anonymous online survey and in the in-person focus group discussions which also ran as part of the wider project (320).

Lang (2009a), however, instead explores how the readers present themselves, '(and by implication, their schemata)' (319), *before* they read the novel. The focus group for this dataset comprised three readers who had not yet read *Small Island* but who had knowledge of the '*Small Island* Read' project. The discussion took place in 2007 with three moderators present, and the group was encouraged to 'think about issues of racism, ethnicity and immigration, and to reflect on the relevance of these today, particularly in relation to modern-day Liverpool' (320). As elsewhere in the dataset, a wariness to discuss these topics was observed among the group.

Lang's analysis considers how the unease felt by the participants was apparent in their use of hedging, in particular. Reflecting on who the target readers of *Small Island* might be, for example, one of the participants began to discuss the ethnic homogeneity of the audience who attended the project events:

> It should be, but I have to say having been to the, um sort of events, and I didn't go to the launch event, but … I suspect there was - weren't man people of Afro-Caribbean origin there. Oth- other than perhaps the people that were, were, were providing the entertainment. If you can find this out for me, [cos the?] different people who went, but certainly umm, if- the sort of profile of people I've seen at, um, say * * Penny Readings, when first- when *Small Island* was first mentioned is, um … you know, it was predominantly a white audience. In fact I could almost say, perhaps exclusively.
>
> *(Lang 2009a: 321)*

Lang notes a marked increase in hedging where the subject of ethnicity is raised in the focus group discussion, and that the uncertainty of the speaker in the example above is represented in the phrases 'I suspect', 'perhaps', and 'I could almost say' within this turn, which are 'here used to mitigate the fact that those present at events were predominately white' (321) as well as indicating the speaker's anxiety discussing the topic.

Lang gives equal emphasis to both parts of the discussion. The first half comprises the literature review, the reflections on the limitations of the study, and its theoretical context, and the second half makes up the analysis sections. This is fairly typical for exploratory papers, where transparency about methodological issues and critical reflections on the replicability, or need for refinement, of approaches is especially important. Despite the limitations of the project – which include being unable follow up with the focus group readers on their post-reading reflections, and the self-censorship which is likely to take place in socially situated

reading experiences, among others – Lang nevertheless advocates for the project's utility in contributing to broader discussions of situated reading experiences. She argues that

> [A]s an exploratory study it still stands as a valuable model of how larger studies might be done, and as a reminder that research into reading practices needs to start from an earlier point than it has tended to do in order to incorporate readers' views prior to the reading experience.
>
> *(Lang 2009a: 325)*

As part of reflecting on what might be done, Lang ends the paper with some methodological suggestions for further studies of the hermeneutics of reading, which potentially could include empirical methods for capturing 'before' and 'after' reading experiences, by, for example, recording discussions pre- and post-reading, and by controlling for other textual and contextual variables (see Section 2.4).

2.3.2 Experimental research: Narrative empathy

Fernandez-Quintanilla's (2020) experimental paper investigates how narrative empathy is experienced in reading fiction, and, in particular, the connections between textual and reader factors that give rise to readers' feelings of empathy for characters. Through qualitative analysis of reader responses, as generated through focus group discussions of short stories, the aims of the project are to consider:

1 The potential for empathy of the stories under analysis
2 Readers' engagement with characters in relation to empathy, and
3 The role and interplay between textual and reader factors in participants' responses

(2020: 125)

Fernandez-Quintanilla opens the paper by offering a definition of empathy that incorporates work from across 'psychology, social neuroscience, philosophy of mind, and cognitive narratology' (126), stating that:

> Narrative empathy involves a character-oriented (emotional) response and perspective taking. The reader forms a mental representation of the character's situation and mental state(s) while maintaining a self-other distinction. In this way, readers re-enact, simulate, or imaginatively experience in a first-person way what they perceive is the character's mental state and mental activity. The resulting response is congruent with the reader's perception and understanding of what the character's experience must be like.
>
> *(125)*

The review surveys earlier work in narratology by Keen (2006) that identifies, but does not confirm, different narrative techniques that might facilitate reader experiences of empathy (126). Fernandez-Quintanilla also reflects on four earlier empirical studies that have similarly analysed the connection between textual features and empathy, albeit through different thematic foci such as literariness and aesthetically distanced reading (Kuzmičová et al. 2017), or in relation to a specific linguistic feature such as mode of narration (e.g., Van Lissa et al. 2016) or metaphor (Laffer 2016). The review closes with a return to the definition, and an emphasis on the two elements of narrative empathy: readers as recipients, and characters as created through textual phenomena.

The connection between these two elements drives the experimental design of the study, which comprises the analyses of two corresponding datasets: a stylistic analysis of the text selection – in this case, two biographical short stories from the collection *The Book of Embraces* (Galeano 1991), recounting different experiences of political persecution and torture – and a thematic analysis of reader responses to the stories. The reader response dataset was generated through two focus group discussions of 4–5 readers, where each group read both stories, and were given some post-reading questions to discuss. Following best practice, Fernandez-Quintanilla critically reflects on and justifies her choices of reader data generation. The decision to have small groups for the discussion, she argues, facilitated more nuanced responses, especially important when more complex experiences or topics are discussed, and further allowed participants to express themselves more freely than other forms of post-reading assessment, such as written questionnaires (133). The decision to choose texts that were complete and unmodified stories was similarly important, allowing the participants to have a more naturalised reading experience (134) (see Section 2.4).

The analysis of these two datasets enables discussion of the study's third research aim, listed above, which is premised on determining potential connections between text features and readers' experiences of empathy felt towards a character. For the first part of the analysis, and forming the first dataset, the two stories are analysed in relation to the narratological features and linguistic frameworks applied in empathy research, including (1) the representation of point of view, (2) the discourse presentation of characters' speech and thought, (3) the representation of the characters' emotions, and (4) broader characterisation techniques, such as the use of naming devices. Based on this initial text analysis, Fernandez-Quintanilla tentatively hypothesises that participants would not show empathy with the perpetrators in the two stories, which included style choices that have been found to heighten empathetic distancing.

The reader responses are then coded and qualitatively analysed, this time using analysis software, through a scheme comprising both inductive and deductive coding categories related to how the readers attributed goals, values, and situations to characters, and whether they expressed explicit empathy, among others. The analysis discusses extracts from the reader discussion, with contextualised examples

of the thematic codes. Examples of explicit empathy were observed, as in this response from one reader:

> (1) I think that in today's society, the word 'dictatorship' readily provokes an automatic moral rejection, and it automatically makes you **feel empathy towards** the people who are suffering that dictatorship.
>
> *(Original emphasis; 136)*

Other sections of the analysis investigate examples of the readers' emotional resistance and distancing from characters (justified through a type of moral negative evaluation)), as exemplified in the fifth extract:

> (5) I think he shows the meanness of human beings. There are human beings, **there are people who have no scruples**. Because you can reject doing that (…) **There is always another option**.
>
> *(Original emphasis; 138)*

In summary, the results of the study suggest that 'empathy tends to happen when information about characters' situation and internal states is available […] with the caveat that a negative moral evaluation can override the textual potential for empathy' (135). The discussion considers the complex nature of empathy, with some of the readers reporting heightened empathy even where the stories included style choices associated with greater emotional distancing.

Fernandez-Quintanilla's discussion ends with a reflection on the nature of experimental research, and a suggestion that 'more tentativeness is needed when making claims about one-to-one relationships between textual devices and effects on readers' (141). As with all experimental studies of this nature, there is an emphasis that while highlighting some of the interplays and intricacies between textual choices and readerly effects, such studies do not 'claim generalisability' (140). Instead, experimental projects contribute to, and help pave the way for, further research on the complex, emotional phenomena of reading which are nuanced, context-driven, and varied.

2.3.3 Descriptive research: Nonhuman narration in dystopian fiction

Norledge's (2022) article investigates the projection of nonhuman consciousness in the contemporary dystopian novel *Hollow Kingdom* (Buxton 2019). This story presents a dystopian world populated by people who have become zombie-like, known as 'Hollows', and animals who conversely assume humanlike intelligence. Norledge describes the text as an 'unnatural narrative' which tend to be anti-mimetic, 'presenting scenarios, events or abstractions that are fundamentally opposed to notions of the "real"' (389). The presentation

of animal minds in this novel is unnatural in an otherwise realistically drawn world. Norledge's project is led by a focus on the language of the dystopian fiction genre, and specifically how this novel exemplifies the wider movement in contemporary dystopian fiction towards the presentation of animal characters and nonhuman consciousness.

Norledge first reviews examples of animals as represented in other dystopian fiction, but argues that, historically, '[s]uch narratives, being centred on the lives of their primary human protagonists, offer only limited insights into the existence of animals in dystopia, with the creatures themselves being tangential to the conceptualisation of each respective world' (388). With reference to previous work on the cognitive processing or nonhuman consciousness Bernaerts et al. (2014), Norledge suggests that 'the conceptualisation of nonhuman minds requires […] something of a conceptual blend, in which human and nonhuman traits are interwoven, and the degree of "otherness" is resultantly established' (390). She introduces and applies Stockwell's (2009) concept of 'mind-modelling', which describes the dynamic process through which we understand and interpret other minds, both real and fictional (see also Chapter 4), to explore how these nonhuman minds are stylistically constructed and conceptualised.

To study how this process of mind-modelling works, Norledge considers the voices of two of the animal characters in the novel: Genghis Cat and Shit Turd the crow. Genghis Cat is personified from the outset of the story, where he comes across as formal, aristocratic and conceited:

> There has been a change in the order of things that I can't quite put my claw on … Perhaps it's due to a shift in the lunar light, a cosmic spell, or because I have finally mastered my innate feline sorcery. One thing that hasn't changed – my Mediocre Servants still never seem to leave the home. I believe, if it's at all possible that they have devolved. According to my calculations, they now spend 186 percent of their time growling at the wall. But I have always known them to be a lower life-form, no better than slug-tongued, alopecia-stricken bears with epically shitty balance. They are eggs on legs with no discernible senses and the reflexes of a bugle stuffed with brine shrimp.
>
> *(Buxton 2019: 23)*

As apparent in the above extract, prototypical associations between animals and their personalities are both activated and exacerbated in the characterisation of Genghis Cat's voice. For example, he shows disdain for his inferior, 'lower life-form', 'Mediocre Servants', exemplified further through his creative use of metaphor ('slug-tongued, alopecia-stricken bears', 'eggs on legs') in which they 'are measured against their lack of positive cat qualities – their senses, their reflexes, their balance' (Norledge: 394). Other lexical choices indicate his perceived superiority of intelligence ('According to my calculations') and his self-regard for his powers and skills ('innate feline sorcery') (Norledge: 393).

These stylistic choices enable us to mind-model Genghis Cat's idiosyncratic, and anthropomorphised, world-view, by mapping human-like qualities onto his voice, and playing on readers' schematic knowledge of cats and their natural behaviours.

While also personified, Shit Turd the crow, *Hollow Kingdom*'s protagonist, has a different voice and personality to Genghis Cat. As Norledge (398) notes, he seems initially hesitant about identifying himself as a crow, and appears hyper aware of, and self-conscious about, the schematic knowledge that readers are likely to hold for crows as a species. He then finally and reluctantly introduces himself, as in the extract below:

> So, the truth – my name is Shit Turd (S.T. for short) and I'm a domesticated crow, raised by Big Jim who taught me the ways of your kind whom he called "MoFos." He gave me my floral vocabulary and my indubitably unique name. He taught me to say some MoFo words. Because of the aforementioned Tinder misadventures, Big Jim and I spent quality, or rather quantity, time together and I have an array of tricks under my plume. I know about MoFo things like windows and secrets and blow-up dolls. And I am the rare bird who loves your kind, the ones who walk on two legs and built the things you dreamt of, including the Cheeto®. I owe my life to you. As an honorary MoFo, I'm here to be utterly honest and tell you what happened to your kind. The thing none of us saw coming.
>
> *(Buxton 2019: 3–4)*

The style choices characterise his voice in distinctive ways. As Norledge summarises, compared to Genghis Cat, S.T. is much less formal, using slang terms ('MoFo'), expletives, impoliteness markers and sarcasm. His characterisation and the presentation of his voice confers an additional 'meta-level to his consciousness' in that he 'considers himself an honorary human' (Norledge: 398). This is apparent, for example, in the way that he deferentially positions himself in relation to his human audience of readers through second-person address ('I am the rare bird who loves your kind') and in how he mind-models Big Jim, such that readers are invited to participate in an additional third-order mind-modelling of this alter human perspective.

Norledge concludes the study by arguing that the mind-modelling processes required for reading *Hollow Kingdom* involve a 'textured and multilayered' depiction of animal minds (403). Through descriptive exploration of these unusual nonhuman voices, she is able to investigate how 'Buxton's novel offers unique insights, presenting the fears, anxieties and eventual joys of animals in dystopia' through particular stylistic mechanisms, and a linguistic, and cognitively driven, account of how 'the presentation of animal minds is […] plausible, aligning with human expectations, beliefs and schematic knowledge of nonhuman consciousness in the real world' (403).

2.3.4 Methodological research: Rethinking modality

Methodologically focused studies are more likely to form part of a postgraduate, doctoral or post-doctoral level projects in stylistics. The more theoretical focus of these types of studies typically arises from more extended, ongoing critical research, where researchers who have specialised in a topic or theory may wish to refine, amend or develop the theoretical apparatus of a particular framework. These types of contributions may well form part of a series of papers or studies and can also be part of a wider conversation between other researchers working in the same area. Gavins' (2005) paper, for example, reconsiders the Text World Theory model of human discourse processing (Werth 1999) through an application of Simpson's (1993) modal grammar of narrative fiction. Gavins clarifies that this paper is part of the ongoing collaborative testing and consolidation of Paul Werth's original Text World Theory framework, which was outlined, but sadly never fully completed, in his manuscript *Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse* (1999) and which has since been posthumously edited and developed by a number of cognitive stylisticians.

As Gavins summarises, Text World Theory is a model that 'divides all discourse situations into manageable levels of conceptual activity: The discourse-world, the text-world, and the sub-world' (80). As she elaborates, the 'discourse-world' comprises all the physical, personal and cultural details that make up the 'real-world context' experienced by discourse participants who, in the context of reading fiction, will be the reader and the author. 'Text-world' structures are the 'richly detailed mental representations […] of the discourse' (80) in the minds of these participants, cued by nominal descriptions of the background (world-builders) and actions or events that advance the narrative (function-advancers). 'Sub-worlds', of particular interest in this paper, are formed 'as a result of some form of departure from the text-world parameters initially established by a particular text' (81). As context for revisiting this concept, Gavins references her earlier doctoral work (2001) where she proposes the term 'world-switch' to replace 'sub-world', which better captures the process of attentional monitoring experienced by readers and which removes the hierarchical implications of the original term.

Highlighting inconsistencies in Werth's original classification of modalised propositions, Gavins proposes additional modifications to the Text World model to more effectively account for modalised propositions in discourse. Through descriptions of 'deontic' (expressions of duty and obligation), 'boulomaic' (expressions of hopes, desires and wishes), and 'epistemic' (expressions of certainty and knowledge) modality types described by Simpson's modal grammar, Gavins argues that

> A restructuring of Werth's original taxonomy of sub-worlds, in line with Simpson's modal grammar, would seem to address many of the inconsistencies identified in Werth's handling of this area of discourse. I am proposing, therefore, that both the want-worlds and intend-worlds included in Werth's attitudinal sub-world category […] all belong under the broad umbrella-term of modal-worlds. *(Gavins 2005: 87)*

With reference to an example analysis of Beckett in Simpson (1993), Gavins reframes the original account of modality through the text-world model. Finally, she argues that revising the model in this way enables text-world researchers to talk about the impact of focalisation and the importance of the relationship between character point of view and the conceptual structures of the text, and, importantly, that this development of the model will synergistically contribute to Simpson's modal grammar, 'and our understanding of modality as a whole' (80).

2.4 Reader response data in stylistics

This second half of this chapter explores why incorporating reader response data may help support your analysis and examines how existing research balances text and reader response data (Sections 2.4.3–2.4.5). An overview of some of the practical and ethical considerations involved in generating reader response data is also outlined in Section 2.5.

As we highlight in Chapter 1, the emphasis on the interpretive effects of language in stylistics means that stylisticians have always been interested in readers. Studies of readers may involve thinking about how readers discuss books in everyday situations, such as in classrooms, in book groups and in online spaces. A study is called 'naturalistic' if it prioritises how people read in these natural environments and everyday contexts. For other projects, researchers may be less interested in the natural processes of reading and more interested in exploring – as in the case of experimental research designs, for example – the relationship between a linguistic feature and an interpretive effect. In 'experimental' reader response research, artificial reading scenarios are set up in order to control for and assess different variables. If you want to assess or compare the time it takes people to read a short story, for example, the researcher, or some sort of automated monitoring, will need to accurately record your participants' reading times. Equally, if you're interested in how readers emotionally respond to a particular scene from a novel, then asking your participants to read the scene, and then answer some post-reading questions about it, for example, might be the best way of capturing this more directed response.

If you intend to generate some reader data as part of your research project, there are some further steps, in addition to those listed above in Section 2.1, that you will need to think about in the planning stages. You should also consider:

- The type of reader data you plan to generate
- How you plan to analyse the reader data, and
- To what extent your reader data analysis will form part of your overall analysis of the text (i.e., Is the text itself the main object of your study, or are you more interested in how your participants frame and articulate their reading experiences?)

As with the other choices within your project, each of these steps will be affected by your research design and your research questions. Sections 2.4.3–2.4.5 summarise the research questions and design choices of some example published studies, each of which integrate reader response data in different ways.

2.4.1 Emphasis on reader data: Types of readers

Doche and Ross (2023) carry out qualitative analysis of 25 positive and 25 negative reviews of the collection *Ariel* (Plath 1965), chosen because it is considered by readers to be 'difficult'. As the researchers summarise, '[i]n literature, 'difficulty' pertains either or both to the text (production) and the reading experience (reception)' (Doche and Ross 2023: 978). In reference to an earlier analysis of complexities within the poem 'Elm', they argue that part of this difficulty arises from the fact that 'Plath's poetics provides no direct correspondence between the signifier (i.e. the word used in the poetic context) and the signified (i.e. the concept or the idea the word represents in the real-world context)' (980). The researchers also point out that reader responses to poetry, in particular, have been less studied in literary linguistic research.

For this project, reader response data were collected from Goodreads, an open-access book recommendation service within the public domain. The researchers summarise the breakdown of the response to *Ariel* on the website, which, at the time of the study, had an average rating of 4.2/5 stars. They further acknowledge that the positive ratings make up 79% of the total ratings, because 'online reviews have shown a tendency for a positive bias as compared to the general population. This is premised on the notion that a reader buys or borrows a book based on the assumption that they will enjoy it' (981). The researchers additionally describe their criteria for collecting the data: they counted a rating of 4 and 5 stars as a positive review, and a rating of 1 or 2 stars as a negative review. They collected the reviews that appear first, as sorted by the site's algorithm, but selected those that were no longer than 'one or two paragraphs of around 5–15 lines' in order to keep the dataset manageable and to ensure a fuller, qualitative analysis. An oversight of the word counts also allowed greater parity for the comparisons made across the different star conditions and review categories. All the reviews were anonymised and given an identifier: PR [+no.] for positive reviews, and NR [+ no.] for the negative ones.

To guide the thematic coding of the dataset, one central research question was raised:

> RQ: To what extent do positive and negative reviews of Plath's *Ariel* on Goodreads simultaneously construe different types of readerly attitudes and different types of responses to 'difficulty'?
>
> *(Doche and Ross 2023: 982)*

The thematic codes that arose in answer to this question produced a set of reader types, agreed on by both coders. These included three distinct readerly attitudes: the Self-Deprecator, the Re-Reader, and the Senser.

TABLE 2.1 Thematic codes and reader review examples summarised after Doche and Ross (2023: 984–992)

Reader attitude	*Positive review example*	*Negative review example*
The Self-Deprecator	'I gave it 4 stars […] because I didn't think it'd be fair to give it less simply because of my personal lack of understanding of poetry' (PR16; 984)	'I just…I don't know, none of these poems made sense to me. It must be partly due to the fact that English is not my first language and tbh poetry has always been difficult for me' (NR1; 985)
The Re-Reader	'I borrowed Ariel from the local library but intend to buy a copy for myself, so I can reread it whenever I want. Obviously, I am not capable of interpreting this kind of complex and dense poem, so I decided to do some research and now the message is clear to me' (PR19; 987)	'I don't know what to say about this one, only that I want to come back to it once I have read more. Some phrases really connected with me, but mostly it just washed over me without much care. Maybe I need to read bad poetry to really appreciate what she is doing here' (NR5; 987)
The Senser	'Beautiful, immediate, and haunting. Ariel is a collection of poems that demand an emotional response with language that is visceral, evocative, and highly intentioned. The poems resonated chillingly, communicating intense resonance through relatively traditional structure' (PR18; 990)	'Poetry is pleasurable for me because I can immerse myself in a pool of words, my own private ritual bath, but this book felt like immersing myself in shredded glass – or more like a vacuum – painful and unclear to me why it should be valuable' (NR12; 991)

The first reader type, the Self-Deprecators, frame their attitudes differently in the positive and negative reviews. The positive reviews, as in the example from PR16 in Table 2.1, are found to display a 'positive bias towards the collection' (Doche and Ross 2023: 984), deriving from the assumption that 'their differing opinions on *Ariel* show their own poetic inability' (984). On the other hand, the negative reviews that display this Self-Deprecator stance 'provide disclaimers which – by explaining what generates their lack of understanding – add an extra element to the causal loop' (985). Taking the excerpt from NR1's review in Table 2.1 as an example, the reviewer infers that their language proficiency, as an L2 speaker, forms a barrier for their engagement.

Like the Self-Deprecators, the Re-Readers are found to adopt an 'epistemic reading' (Doche and Ross 2023: 987) stance – that is, a desire to have a fuller

understanding or knowledge of the text – while other readers in this category adopt an 'aesthetic' reading position (Rosenblatt 1978), prioritising 'new experiences and connections' (Doche and Ross 2023: 987). The extract from PR19's review in Table 2.1 displays an epistemic reading stance, with the Re-Reader noting the requirement to carry out extra-textual research to overcome their difficulty in 'interpreting this kind of complex and dense poem' (987). Conversely, the aesthetic Re-Readers instead 'make connections between the poems and their immediate socio-material environments' (Doche and Ross 2023: 987). An additional example from PR4 is examined, which notes: 'I am leaving it in my night table so I can revisit it every other day. I've read all of the poems two or three times' (987). Here, the Re-Reader explicitly illustrates the physical, and spatiotemporal, context of their re-reading practice. In all cases, the Re-Readers are found to display a higher investment (see Nuttall and Harrison 2020) in their unwillingness 'to be 'defeated' by the poems' (Doche and Ross 2023: 988).

Finally, the Sensers are those who favour reading 'for the sensations it generates (aesthetic reading) rather than for any meaning-making purposes (epistemic reading)' (Doche and Ross 2023: 989). PR18 describes the general feelings the text elicits, forcing an impact or effect on the reader as a reactive recipient at the mercy of an agentive force ('Ariel is a collection of poems that demand an emotional response', PR18). In the case of the negatively coded reviews, reviewers use 'visceral intersensory-physiognomic language evoking both senses and affect' (Doche and Ross 2023: 991). In the case of NR12's response, this is reconceptualised as a physically painful experience as compared to another, more soothing 'pool of words'.

The emphasis of this study, then, is on readers and the reading experience, and specifically on *how* readers display their identity and position their attitudes. The researchers highlight that such an approach contributes to existing conversations in revealing how readers discuss poetry in online discourse, and specifically on Goodreads as a particular kind of social context. Like other contemporary stylistics research that integrates reader responses, the researchers further advocate the importance of capturing the experiences, attitudes and behaviours of real readers in everyday new media platforms (see Chapter 5).

2.4.2 Emphasis on text data: Reader responses to characterisation

In contrast to Doche and Ross's (2023) analysis, Harrison and Giovanelli's (2022) article is primarily driven by the literary text under consideration. This paper explores the characterisation of the central character Olive in the contemporary novel *Olive Kitteridge* (Strout 2008), and reflects on the affordances of the text's genre. Introduced and defined as a 'short story cycle', a text that falls somewhere between a novel and a collection of interconnected short stories, *Olive Kitteridge* is set in the fictional town of Maine. Each of the thirteen chapters focalises a different character, and Olive appears, either centrally or more fleetingly, at some point in each story.

Research in stylistics suggests that characterisation is a dynamic and two-way process, inviting readers to build up profiles for a character based on a series of textual prompts, as well as the reader's own background knowledge and individual experiences of people and social relationships (Culpeper 2021). Stockwell (2020) proposes that the textual prompts range from direct descriptions of physical appearance to the representations of thoughts and beliefs, as well as the reactions of other characters. Harrison and Giovanelli's paper investigates how readers are invited to model and track the mind of Olive, and the various characterisation devices that encourage them to do so, ultimately helping to build a rich, well-rounded protagonist.

The researchers integrate reader response data as a starting point for the analysis, demonstrating how the positive reviews of the text identify the emotional resonance felt during and after reading, and how this is affected by the characterisation of Olive. The top five community reviews of the text, collected from the open-access book recommendation website, Goodreads (see Section 2.4.1), are included in the analysis section of the paper. Like Doche and Ross (2023), Harrison and Giovanelli identify the recurring themes within the reader reflections, and especially those that commented on their emotional responses to Olive. These themes and examples from the reader data are summarised in Table 2.2 (note that when identifying thematic codes within your dataset, it is standard practice to italicise the label, as in the examples in the left-hand side of the table).

TABLE 2.2 Thematic codes and reader responses in Harrison and Giovanelli (2022) summarised from pp. 434–436

Thematic code	*Examples from reader data*
Personal reflection	'I could easily identify with [the characters] and even see similarities to people I know' (R2)
Discomfort that results from the personal reflection	'the tales had maybe a bit too much resonance', making readers 'squirm through such recognition' (R3)
Notable short story cycle features (including *absence of resolution* and *polyphony*)	'[the story had a] big unanswered question' (R5); 'Each story is presented from different viewpoints and shows Olive's many sides' (R2)
Strout's authorial position	'Strout's use of the novel-in-stories form, however, is pitch-perfect for the fundamental story she tells' (R1)
The author is an artist	The characters are 'realistically drawn' (R2); Strout is described as 'paint[ing] a picture of Olive' (R1)
Olive's agency in the storytelling	'Olive's hands making connections' (R5)
Olive as a real-world person	'I connected and related to Olive so deeply, I spoke out loud to her a few times, during this re-read. I wanted her to know that I understood, that I often felt the same way. I didn't want her to feel alone' (R4)

The responses collectively show how readers view Olive as a well-rounded character, and so much so that, in the case of the final example, she appears to have a presence outside of the pages of the book.

Harrison and Giovanelli use this small, qualitative dataset as a snapshot of the wider reader reactions to Olive, and as a precursor to the text analysis that explores the linguistic mechanisms inviting these complex processes of characterisation and the emotional resonance that follows. In *Olive Kitteridge*, Olive is introduced to readers through the perspective of other characters, which include, firstly, via the focalised point of view (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1) of her husband, Henry. In the first short story, 'Pharmacy', Olive's voice – and Henry's more negative assessment of his wife – are related through reports of her direct speech, giving readers access to Olive's externalised thoughts only. Notably, 'suspensions', which occur where narratorial description appears between two items of direct speech, give readers a more subjective evaluation of Henry's assessment of Olive's personality, mood and perspective.

> "Yes, it most certainly is too goddam much to ask!" *Olive had almost spit, her fury's door flung open.* "You have no idea how tired I am, teaching all day, going to foolish meetings where the goddam principal is a moron!" (Strout 2008: 8, added emphasis).
>
> 'Henry's mind seemed to take a picture of that moment, his son's indistinctive deference at the very same time they heard Olive's voice in the next room. "Oh, you poor child", *in a voice that Henry would always remember – filled with such dismay that all her outer Olive-ness seemed stripped away*. "You poor, poor child" (Strout 2008: 20, added emphasis).
>
> *(Harrison and Giovanelli 2022: 437)*

In the first example, Henry draws on an EMOTIONS ARE BUILDINGS metaphor, characterising Olive as someone prone to extreme emotions; the threshold of anger one that she crosses easily, frequently and with force. In the second, Olive's personality is conceptualised by Henry as an external layer; a type of armour or wrapping that can be 'stripped away' by emotion. Both suspensions demonstrate Herny's assessment of Olive as 'changed and changeable', especially when contrasted against his own more muted and steadier demeanour. The analysis continues by assessing how following the different iterations and enactors of Olive's character across the cycle requires readers to reappraise their perceptions, remodelling character minds through complex attentional tracking processes.

The text analysis forms the focus of the paper, with the discussion centred on the specific textual mechanisms that give rise to the pervasive and tenable sense of 'Olive-ness', and the reader data providing evidence of emotional experiences from real readers as an ancillary context for the study. A smaller, qualitative dataset like of reader responses like this one can be used as a means of previewing wider reader responses and reactions to a character, theme or novel, while helping situate how and where the stylistic choices create the 'distinctive kind of text-driven character-building' (Harrison and Giovanelli: 445) typical of the short story cycle form.

2.5 Research ethics for reader data generation

Ethical issues relevant to your research should always be considered before starting a new project. If you are completing a piece of stylistics research as part of a university assignment, you should check with your lecturer for any specific university requirements, as most institutions will have a standardised ethics application and review process. It is likely that you will be asked to submit an ethics application that outlines the details of the research design of your study. This ensures your research is carried out safely and appropriately, using established methodological protocols. It is also very important that you receive full ethics approval for your project *before* you begin generating your data, so you should start thinking about your research design as early as possible to prevent any delays.

An experimental reader response study will require a more detailed review of ethics process, and you may need to address, and appropriately mitigate for, the following ethical issues.

2.5.1 Informed consent

If you've ever completed a survey, you would have been given some participant information about the survey at the very beginning. Perhaps it told you what the survey was about, what type of questions you would be asked, and how long it would take. It's also very likely that you will have been asked, following the introduction to the project, to confirm that you are happy to take part, and to agree to share your responses as described in the project information. This is known as 'informed consent' and refers to the fact that all participants who take part in a project must have a clear idea of what to expect both from the study itself, and also of how the data will be later used by the researcher. Typically, informed consent is addressed through a series of statements that participants are asked to agree or confirm before they have taken part in a project.

2.5.2 Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw

Any participants you recruit to take part in your reader response study should be there on a voluntary basis. If you are lucky enough to have some financial support for your project, it may be that you are able to offer your participants a financial incentive or perhaps a voucher to remunerate their time, but under no circumstances should your participants be coerced into taking part. On a related note, you should also make it clear at the beginning of the study that your participants have the right to withdraw, without giving an explanation and with no negative repercussions. In the information you provide your participants, it's always a good idea to explain what the cutoff date is for withdrawal. If your study is part of a university assignment or you to plan to publish your work, for example, you may want to outline a specific withdrawal window from the time of data generation, just to make sure

that you don't have to rewrite parts of your analysis if someone pulls out later than you expected.

2.5.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

With the exception of studies that have a more ethnomethodological focus, it's generally best practice for reader studies in stylistics to ensure that data are anonymised where possible. Any personal or identifying information should either be redacted or removed entirely. To help you keep track of your data, and to make it clear which response belongs to which of your participants, you should give your readers a unique identifier at the start of the study. This can be an alias or an alphanumeric identifier (e.g., R1, R2, etc.). Either way, you should keep a note, in a secure place, of which identifier refers to the response of which participant, so that if they do decide to withdraw from the study, you are able to remove their data easily.

2.5.4 Data storage

Your data should be stored securely, in a password-protected, electronic format. Your university is likely to have a preferred storage system, which your institution's IT team will be able to confirm.. As part of your ethics application, you will need to give details of who will have access to this data. It may be that the data are accessible only to you, or if you are working with a collaborator, research assistant or sharing your work with a supervisor, this information will also need to be shared.

2.5.5 Potential sensitive content

It may be that you are planning to explore how readers respond to a text that contains potentially sensitive content, related to, for example, characters' represented experiences of grief, mental illness, disability, and so on. If this is the case, you should mention this in your participant information overview or in the briefing before your participants begin the study. Your participants should be given the opportunity to ask any questions or raise any concerns before they get started.

2.5.6 Personal safety

If you are carrying out an in-person study, you may need to include details of how you will address any issues of personal safety. You will be encouraged, for example, to carry out any face-to-face studies on the university grounds, or in a public place. Equally, if there is a worldwide pandemic taking place (!), and you with to generate some data through an in-person survey, you should specify how you plan to follow the current guidelines to protect the health and safety of you and your participants. Again, you should discuss your plans with a tutor or supervisor if you are unsure.

When collecting naturally occurring data that exists in an open-access source and in the public domain, only some of the above considerations need apply. It is always important, however, to follow advice from colleagues, and the guidelines established by your institution or a relevant academic association. If you are generating data from a survey of passers-by on the street, on the other hand, then it is likely that all the above should be addressed, as a minimum. Of course, the particular issues will vary from project to project, and what is an issue for one may not be an issue for another.

2.6 Copyright and third-party materials

Finally, if you plan to publish your work, copyright regulations should be considered, especially if you are writing on contemporary fiction or if the texts you are analysing are not within the public domain. Copyright laws will vary from country to country, so it is worth familiarising yourselves with the requirements for your specific location. Currently in the United Kingdom, for example, if you plan to publish your analysis and to include a section or extracts from a published novel, you will need to check whether your treatment of the text falls under what is called 'fair use'.[1] Third party permissions must be sought in cases where you believe your use of a text may not be covered under the fair use exception.

If you are considering publishing your research then your publisher will be able to advise if you are unsure whether your inclusion of extracts falls under fair use. Publishers will also have particular policies and guidance in place for authors, so it is best to check what they recommend for your publication. If you do need to seek permission, you should be able to identify who holds the copyright to the text by checking the bibliographic details at the front of the book. In most cases, you should contact the permissions department of the publishing house who produced your chosen text and/or, depending on how the rights have been apportioned, the author's agent. Many publishers will have online forms that ask you to outline details of your planned output, which might include a description of the context in which the extract will appear (i.e., how it will be used or analysed in the chapter). Ask about any potential copyright concerns as soon as possible, because seeking permissions can be a lengthy process. It is very likely that you will need to pay a fee for the reproduction of an extract, so again this is worth thinking about in the earlier planning stages.

2.7 Next steps

As you read through the remaining chapters in this book, you may want to reflect on some of the ideas we have introduced in this chapter. Hopefully you'll start to recognise the different project types and research designs, and you'll notice how researchers' choices of data and methods are tailored to their research questions. Whenever you're unsure of where to begin with a new project, the best thing to do

is to read the work of others and to think about what you might want to contribute to these existing research conversations.

2.8 Further reading

For more guidance on how to design a new project, any textbook in stylistics will summarise some of the key concepts, topics and frameworks that make up the many potential avenues of further research. Some contemporary examples include Giovanelli and Harrison (2024), Jeffries and McIntyre (2025), Simpson (2014b), and Stockwell (2020). For further context on reader response data in stylistics, Whiteley and Canning (2017) review the historical development of reader response research within the discipline. Bell et al. (2021) showcase a range of reader response data and methods, while Hakemulder and van Peer (2016) is a shorter chapter summary of empirical studies in stylistics. Finally, Pihlaja and Allington (2016) and Chapter 5 (this volume) discuss research ethics in the context of online reader review data.

Note

1 This is the term used in the United Kingdom's Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988. For further information, please refer directly to the act and the guidance on copyright exemptions.

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PART II

Topics in Stylistics

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3

NARRATOLOGICAL STYLISTICS

In this chapter, we will consider

- **how to discuss different levels within a narrative and the telling/receiving figures involved at each;**
- **how a fictional text can implicate, involve, and affect the reader in the real world;**
- **how combining stylistics with narrative theory provides a richer toolkit for the simultaneous analysis of language, structure, and form.**

3.1 Introduction

Putting it simply, while stylistics focuses on how the content of a text is linguistically presented, narratology is more interested in how the story of that text is told. This means thinking about how the narrative is constructed, communicated, and ultimately held together at the structural level rather than the linguistic. Indeed, narratology has its roots in structuralism which, as the name suggests, centred less on the evaluation of individual texts (as per literary criticism) and more on their structural patterns or form. Structuralism thus paved the way for narratology: a discipline typified by its commitment to describing the systematic function and form of narrative through theoretical analysis.

A key facet of this is the narratological distinction between the level at which the narration occurs and the level at which the narrated events happen. The classifications for these two dimensions can be traced back to Viktor Šklovsky (1965 [1917]), one of the Russian Formalists. Šklovsky distinguished between *fablua*, the sequence of events that make up a narrative, and *sjuzet*, the order, manner and style in which those events are then presented. For example, the *fabula* of

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Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* includes the experiences of the protagonist, Pip, from his early childhood to adulthood; its *sjuzet*, on the other hand, concerns the presentation of those events in Pip's first-person account which he narrates as an adult after the time period of the *fabula* has concluded (for more examples, see Bradford 1997). In the latter half of the 20th century, this distinction was fleshed out by Gérard Genette – one of the most influential figures in narratology – and reconceptualised as *discours* (the narrative act of the narrator) and *histoire* (the story the narrator tells); translated into English, we can refer to these as *discourse* and *story*, respectively.

From this base, Genette outlined the difficulties in considering narratives in relation to person alone (e.g. first-person or third-person). He instead proposed a paradigm which classifies narrators not only in terms of their position in a particular narrative level, but also based on their participation within the main story. Applying the name *diegesis* to 'the (fictional) world in which the situations and events occur' (Prince 2003: 20), Genette states that a narrator who exists within the main story is *intradiegetic*, while a narrator who exists outside the story (i.e. only in the narrative discourse) is *extradiegetic*. Additionally, if a narrator is a protagonist within the diegesis and is therefore telling (at least to some extent) their own story, they can be considered *homodiegetic*; if they are the main protagonist, then they would be *autodiegetic*. If the narrator is unequivocally not a character in the story – such as in what might typically be considered third-person narratives – then they are *heterodiegetic*. This created the following typology of narrators which still dominates narrative theory today.

1 *Extradiegetic-heterodiegetic*: Homer, a narrator in the first degree who tells a story he is absent from;
2 *Extradiegetic-homodiegetic*: Gil Blas, a narrator in the first degree who tells his own story;
3 *Intradiegetic-heterodiegetic*: Scheherazade, a narrator in the second degree who tells stories she is on the whole absent from;
4 *Intradiegetic-homodiegetic*: Ulysses in Books IX-XII, a narrator in the second degree who tells his own story.

(Genette 1980: 248)

Although these classifications are ultimately realised via linguistic cues within a text, this paradigm epitomises narratologists' focus on structure and form. Consequently, stylistics and narratology have been treated as separate disciplines.

Still, they share common themes, methods and analytical approaches. In fact, many stylisticians have long drawn on narratological techniques, and vice versa. Roger Fowler's *Linguistics and the Novel* (1977) provided one of the earliest combinations in this regard and treated narratology's foundational distinction between story and discourse as an overarching framework for his stylistic analysis. A few years later, in their seminal *Style in Fiction*, Geoffery Leech and Mick Short

considered 'the analogy between choices of rendering made on the fictional plane, and stylistic choices made on the linguistic plane' (2007 [1981]: 139). Michael Toolan then drew on a variety of narratological concepts for *The Stylistics of Fiction* (1990), including diegetic levels, covert vs. overt narration (Chatman 1978) and focalisation (Genette 1980; also Bal 2017 [1985]). More recently, Dan Shen has cemented herself as a champion for the blending of stylistics and narratology, acknowledging their differences but nonetheless highlighting the advantages of bringing the two disciplines together. Although she admits that, superficially, stylisticians' focus on linguistic features may preclude their need to consider the foundational structural choices of narratology, she has also demonstrated how both can contribute to a text's overall style (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2 for a discussion on what 'style' means). In her chapter for Routledge's *Handbook of Stylistics* (2023), for example, Shen cites point of view/focalisation, characterisation, and tense as pivotal examples of the tensions and complementary applications of stylistics and narratology in studying literary texts.

For the first, she outlines the differences between stylisticians' traditional focus on point of view as 'the telling of the story through the words or thoughts of a particular person' (Leech and Short 2007: 140) and Genette's concept of focalisation. The former rests on the linguistic representation of speech and thought as a way of orienting perspective and attributing it to the mind of a particular character; the latter provides a distinction between who speaks (voice, a matter of narration) and who sees (eyes, a matter of focalisation). Using Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as an example, Shen shows how the first-person pronoun 'I' is used to refer to different versions of the narrator, primarily his past experiencing self and his narrating present. For instance, in part three of the novel, the first-person narrator says:

> You remember I told you I had been struck at the distance by certain attempts at ornamentation, rather remarkable in the ruinous aspect of the place. Now I had suddenly a nearer view, and its first result was to make me throw my head back as if before a blow.
>
> *(Conrad 1973 [1899]: 82)*

Here the narrating voice ultimately remains the same, but the focalisation shifts from Marlow's narrating present – when he talks to 'you' about the story he is telling and the events he remembers – to his past experiencing self. The introduction of 'now' and 'suddenly' in the second sentence perhaps feel odd when combined with the past perfect 'had', but they help to bring the narrative closer to the action as it unfolds and consequently focalise what is being said through the eyes of the younger Marlow who is experiencing and perceiving the events described in real time. By comparing these changes in narrative orientation, Shen demonstrates how experiencing and narrating selves correspond to internal focalisation – where the perceiver is situated within the narrated story – and external focalisation – where the retrospective 'I' exists outside the main diegesis.

Shen further argues that the distinction between narration and focalisation can prove especially useful when talking about indirect narratives when a character's consciousness is filtered through an external narrator. She comments that 'many stylistic analyses do not explicitly address characterisation' (2023: 211) and highlights the value of using narratological categories to elucidate studies of character instead. She offers Jonathan Culpeper's *Language and Characterization* (2001) as a model, showing how Culpeper delineated between 'explicit', 'implicit' and 'authorial' characterisation cues in texts based on stylistic analyses of syntax, lexis, conversational implicature, paralinguistic features and so on – essentially anything related to idiosyncratic style that allows the reader to infer different elements of characterisation at different diegetic levels. Tense is also a key part of this as it provides temporally deictic orientation for any narrative. Importantly, narratologists tend to define tense in relation to speed, order and distance (Prince 2003) as a way of delineating between the narrative discourse and story. Although Shen acknowledges that this definition is peculiar to narratologists, she also addresses its influence in Leech and Short's 'fictional sequencing' (2007: 141–144; 190–192) and Paul Simpson's discussions of 'flashback' and 'prevision' as stylistic elements which 'serve to disrupt the basic chronology of the narrative's plot' (2014: 20). From here, she praises Monika Fludernik's (2003) detailed analysis of tense patterning in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* as a representation of the difference and complementarity between narratological and stylistic approaches to narrative time.

Ultimately, Shen demonstrates that although the differences between stylistics and narratology – and, more specifically, between their respective concepts of 'style' and 'discourse' – are noticeable and important, we as researchers 'need to take advantage of the findings in *both* stylistics and narratology' (2023: 214; emphasis added). This, she believes, may take the form of drawing from narratological concepts to supplement detailed linguistic analysis, or in conducting 'a parallel investigation of stylistic techniques and narratological techniques [to] see how they interact with each other in the text' (2023: 214). Crucially, this kind of approach should acknowledge that any narrative consists of both verbal/stylistic elements *and* structural/organisational devices, with some overlap in between.

3.2 Preliminary considerations

Building on the guidance provided in Chapter 2, this section outlines some of the decisions you will need to make in order to combine stylistics and narratology effectively when analysing a text of your choice. Specifically, we will discuss how to choose a relevant primary text and how to pick an appropriate focal point for your analysis.

3.2.1 Choosing a primary text

First things first: what are you going to be analysing? Although stylistics can elucidate the study of any text, this chapter primarily focuses on literary material (in

part as a useful overlap for the exploration of narrative theory and storytelling) so we'll mirror that in our guidance here.

As a starting point, you may consider asking yourself questions about purpose and interest. Is there a text that you particularly enjoy reading? Do you want to explore what makes it so effective, fun or interesting? Perhaps your favourite novel always makes you cry; stylistics will give you the tools to work out why you react in this way. Maybe you've read a story that played around with fictional conventions or subverted your expectations in terms of its narrative style; stylistics will help you identify and explore what it does differently. Alternatively, have you ever read a text that you just despised and want to dissect everything it did 'wrong' – perhaps also thinking about how different language choices or narrative strategies might have made the reading experience more pleasant? Stylistics is your way in! If you're struggling to decide what to write about, think of a text that you already enjoy and use stylistic methodologies to explore what makes it enjoyable. Remember: stylistics is as much about *how* and *why* meaning is created as it is about *what* meaning is created.

An alternative approach is to think about what you're trying to study overall. This angle lends itself more to the guidance provided in Section 3.2.2, but if you have already decided that, for instance, you want to explore the presentation of speech and thought, or the use of personal pronouns, or the effects of figurative language, then you'll need a text that uses that particular technique effectively. You wouldn't want to limit the primary evidence available to you for analysis, would you? In this case, rather than picking a text that is already familiar to you and investigating how it works, you might want to read a selection of material with the aim of identifying the (likely foregrounded) use of your chosen feature or foci. You can, of course, use your wider knowledge to narrow down your options at an early point. If you're planning to analyse phonological rhyming patterns, for instance, you're unlikely to start reading classic modernist novels. However, if you want to explore the voice of modernist narrators (as we will do in Section 3.3.1), then conducting some initial wider reading of relevant material will provide you with a plethora of examples to pick and choose from when planning your study and/or route of analysis.

3.2.2 Finding your focal point

Deciding what you will be researching is closely connected to your text selection as one very much informs the other, and vice versa. As previously addressed, you may already have an idea of what you want to study and your initial text selection will be underpinned by this knowledge. Alternatively, you may know what text (or kind of text) you want to analyse but still need to decide on a focal point.

There are two main methods that may be of help to you here – and which are equally applicable for the other topics outlined in the rest of this book. One way is to approach a text quite broadly and then narrow your focus; start by reading

through your chosen text (or a relevant extract) and make a note of anything that stands out to you. Your notes could relate to themes, narrative style, perspective, mood, characterisation, specific language choices, repeated patterns, and anything and everything in between. Once you have a list of possible points of interest, go through the text again and try to identify some specific linguistic or narrative constructions that feed into this. As you complete this step, think about the wider textual effect or impact of each feature, and how this contributes to your readerly interpretation of the text.

An alternative strategy is to start with a specific language feature or pattern and then build up your textual evidence and analysis from there. Say that you're looking at the use of the second-person pronoun (as we will in Section 3.3.2) and you already have a list of examples from your primary text evidencing when 'you' is used in a variety of ways. Start by asking yourself why it is being used so prevalently. Is there an immediate interpretive effect? How does its use affect you, the reader? How does this fit in with or contribute to the rest of your chosen text or extract? Is there a broader literary, linguistic or textual significance? Does the use of this particular feature or pattern link to any existing scholarship that will help inform your interpretation or judgement? It's worth noting here that stylistics is characterised by the combination of linguistic knowledge and literary interpretation, as outlined in Chapter 1, so asking these kinds of questions will ensure your analysis is truly stylistic!

3.3 Selected case studies

The next section of this chapter gives an overview of some practical examples that blend narratology and stylistics in their analysis of different primary texts. For convenience and ease of comparison, the studies we review here share a focus on the use of personal pronouns as a way of orienting both the narrator and reading audience in relation to Genette's diegetic levels. While reading these case studies, you are encouraged to consider how drawing from both disciplines (and therein combining linguistic and structural elements) pushes each of these textual analyses further than if the authors had limited themselves to just one approach.

3.3.1 Narrative viewpoint and positioning

This section explores the role of the narrator, a key figure in any narrative and one who has long served as the focal point for both narratologists and stylisticians in their analyses of literary texts. As an example of how you might discuss narrative voice in your own research, we will look at a study by Violeta Sotirova (2020) in which she investigates the complex positioning of narrators in modernist fiction, drawing on examples from the works of Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf to do so. Primarily, Sotirova analyses the language and style of the kind of detached narrative discourse that is quintessential to modernist literature and, through this,

demonstrates how to talk about narrators who are especially awkward or difficult to pin down. To see this in practice, let's begin with the opening of Mansfield's short story 'At the Bay':

> Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills **at the back** were smothered. **You** could not **see** where they ended and the paddocks and bungalows began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows the other side of it; […] **Drenched were the cold fuchsias**, round pearls of dew lay on the flat nasturtium leaves. It **looked** as though the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave had come rippling, rippling – how far? **Perhaps** if **you** had waked up in the middle of the night **you might have seen** a big fish flicking in at the window and then gone again…
>
> *(Mansfield 1981: 201; emphasis from Sotirova 2020: 78)*

Sotirova – drawing on a narratological analysis of the same text by Monika Fludernik (1993) – highlights the use of free indirect style as a linguistic indicator of consciousness. Free indirect style, also known as free indirect discourse or reported discourse, blends a character's point of view with that of the narrator by subsuming the categories of free indirect speech and free indirect thought which, as illustrated in Figure 3.1, already sit in the middle of the character-narrator cline.

In fiction, while direct speech or thought is presented word-for-word as a character said/thought it, indirect speech and thought acts as an amalgamation of what the character said/thought and how the narrator represents it. Importantly, regular indirect discourse includes some sort of reporting tag to credit the original speaker or consciousness being portrayed, even if the content of what is said or thought is reconfigured from the narrator's perspective (e.g. swapping 'I' to third-person pronouns, changing from present tense to past). On the other hand, free indirect style 'does not occupy the position of the complement of a verb of speaking or perceiving (*He said that…*, *She wondered whether…*) but as a main clause in its own right (*Had she observed him at all?* or *Tomorrow was Christmas*)' (Fludernik 2009: 154; original italics). It also tends to include politeness markers, deictic references and evaluation, all of which are usually absent in

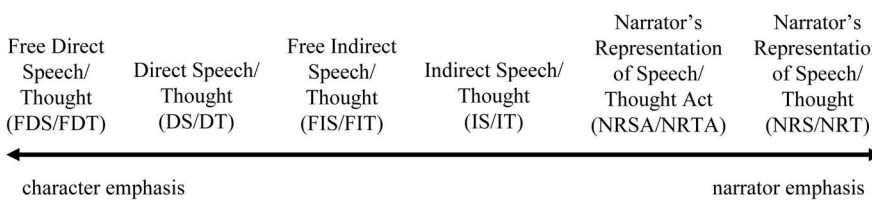
Free Direct Speech/ Thought (FDS/FDT)
Direct Speech/ Thought (DS/DT)
Free Indirect Speech/ Thought (FIS/FIT)
Indirect Speech/ Thought (IS/IT)
Narrator's Representation of Speech/ Thought Act (NRSA/NRTA)
Narrator's Representation of Speech/ Thought (NRS/NRT)
character emphasis
narrator emphasis

FIGURE 3.1 Continuum of speech and thought presentation

Source: Based on Leech and Short (2007: 260).

indirect discourse but are characteristic of idiosyncratic and/or personalised direct speech. Consequently, free indirect style comes across as being framed and facilitated by the narrator, but closer to the original perspective of a character or consciousness.

In the above passage, the emboldened phrases (from Fludernik) and the underlined words (courtesy of Sotirova) capture how the scene is focalised, and therein could be used to argue that *someone* must be observing the landscape described. Spatially deictic phrases like 'at the back' and 'the other side' position the viewpoint in relation to the brush-covered hills and the sandy road, while the description of the sun as 'not yet risen' temporally locates the scene's current situation compared to the past perfect in 'had beaten up' and 'had come'. Additionally, evaluative descriptors like 'softly' and 'drenched' might lead you to wonder who is present to view and judge this scene, especially when no story-level character has been introduced yet. This apparent absence becomes all the more striking when we reach the direct question 'how far' which is indicative not just of a perceptual subjective viewer, but of a subjective *voice*.

The question surrounding who exactly is narrating this passage is the base for Ann Banfield's conception of the 'empty centre' (1987), a narrative phenomenon which stems from the prevalence of free indirect style in modernist fiction in particular. Although unanchored in a character's consciousness and without an explicit focaliser to whom perception and judgement can be attributed, 'empty centre' narratives are nonetheless littered with subjectivity and linguistically oriented in *here* and *now*. We see this in the opening of Mansfield's short story as there is no observing consciousness on the literary stage and therefore no clear narrative persona to whom the combined role of storyteller and viewer can be given, yet there is spatio-temporal orientation to a deictic centre, subjective evaluation, and even a possible awareness of an audience with the use of direct questions and the second-person pronoun.

Dissatisfied with Banfield's 'empty centre' paradigm, Fludernik (1996) posits that the second-person pronoun results in the observing consciousness actually passing to the reader who must project themselves into the empty deictic centre opened in the discourse. On the one hand, this could mitigate the awkwardness of attributing the narrative to an impersonal, absent, but omniscient narrator who is somehow still able to witness the events of the story unfold as, instead, the reader would be repositioned as the viewer and invited to step into the role of judgement-maker and observer. However, Sotirova points out that this would only work if the reader – indexed by the second-person pronoun – became the focaliser, not just an external viewer. This, she argues, is problematic in a new way as second-person pronouns are used only infrequently at the start of 'At the Bay'. In fact, 'you' occurs only three times in the opening section and is always impersonal. That is, 'you' is not going to become an intradiegetic protagonist in the story, nor is it the kind of extradiegetic 'narratee' addressed in the likes of *Jane Eyre*'s classic line, 'Reader, I married him' (Brontë, 1966 [1847]: 453), where

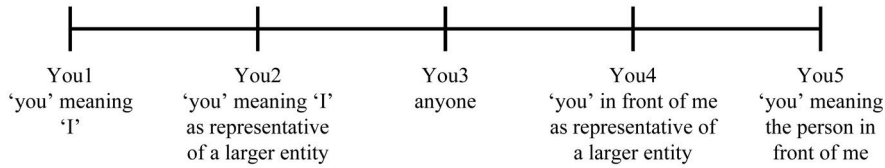

FIGURE 3.2 Continuum of 'you' referents

Source: Based on Kluge (2016: 504).

reference is made to the extrafictional reading audience. As such, the 'you' in Mansfield's text possesses no internal subjectivity and, according to Sotirova, is no more easily definable than Banfield's 'empty centre'. To combat this, Sotirova instead resolves to 'find a linguistically sounder way of unpacking the significance of the second-person pronoun' (2020: 83–84), which she achieves through stylistic analysis.

First, she outlines a 'continuum of reference' proposed by Bettina Kluge (2016) which delineates different reference points for the second-person pronoun, as shown in Figure 3.2. Although based on a corpus of spoken European languages, Kluge's data highlights the prevalence of generic 'you' in oral narratives 'as a means to transport an interlocutor to specific scenery, in order to mentally take the position of the narrator or of a particular character' (2016: 508). Co-opting this for her stylistic analysis, Sotirova concludes that the generic 'you' can 'index the speaker, as well as the interlocutor, without being specifically addressed to the interlocutor' (2020: 86). This results in 'you' being used non-referentially to point to an unknown speaker while simultaneously establishing distance from that speaker through the inherently deictic function of the second-person which, even when generalised, implicates some sort of addressee. In oral discourse, the addressee-oriented meaning of 'you' is favoured as a potential trigger for empathy, even if being used generically or impersonally.

> Speakers opt for the impersonal 'you' in order to make the addressee feel more involved or make them imagine how it would feel if they were undergoing the experiences described. But importantly, a lot of the time, the real referent of 'you' is the first-person speaker. It is their specific personal experience that is being recounted and transformed from an isolated and personal first-person account into what can potentially apply to the addressee, or anyone else. Thus, most impersonal uses of 'you' in discourse implicate not only the addressee in the experience, but also the speaker, albeit indirectly.
>
> *(Sotirova 2020: 87–88)*

How does this relate to the narrative voice in modernist literature then? Well, as discussed already, the second-person pronoun introduced in Mansfield's text

is interactionally coded and invites the reader to occupy a deictic and emotive position within the narrative, as Fludernik suggested, but it should not be interpreted as personal or addressee-inclusive. Instead, Sotirova deems it an 'addressee-exclusive simulation' which is essentially triggered by 'a speaker who seeks the "solidarity" and "empathy" encoded in the pragmatic meanings of the impersonal second-person pronoun' (2020: 88). By necessity, the speaker described here is hidden from view and not personalised – partly in order to favour the represented consciousness of characters within the main story – but is nonetheless able to evaluate the world they inhabit rather than simply reflecting it.

To solidify this claim, Sotirova offers the following extract from the middle section of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. This passage provides a description of the house at which the characters stayed in the first part of the novel, and where they reconvene again towards the end of the book. At this point of the story, however, the house is completely uninhabited and there is no character on stage who can act as a focaliser.

> So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof a downpouring of immense darkness began. Nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness which, creeping in at keyholes and crevices, stole round window blinds, came into bedrooms, swallowed up here a jug and a basin, there a bowl of red and yellow dahlias, there the sharp edges and firm bulk of a chest of drawers.
>
> *(Woolf 1977 [1927]: 137; emphasis from Sotirova 2020: 89)*

Despite there being no possible focaliser, the narrative is framed with subjective observations and deictic orientation, as indicated by the underlined phrases including the perception verb 'seemed' as well as the intrinsic motion-towards-the-viewer captured by the verb 'came'. These features are typical of free indirect style and – cemented by multiple other examples from Woolf's classic novel – suggest that an observer must be located within the scene, even though that isn't possible in the diegetic story. At this point, Sotirova admits that most readers would likely interpret such passages as purely narratorial (specifically extradiegetic) and gloss over any further critique. To researchers of language and style, however, such a dismissal is highly dissatisfying.

It seems the answer lies in a paradox particular to the kind of free indirect style used in modernist fiction. As we've seen in the literary examples above, there is indeed an element of truth in both the detached voice of Banfield's 'empty centre' and the empathetic, interpersonal properties of 'you' discussed by Fludernik. For Sotirova, the juxtaposition of these approaches – especially when combined with proximal deictic references, experiential viewing and subjective evaluation – creates a narrative which is paradoxically immersive

and detached at the same time. This also mirrors the paradoxical qualities of the narrative voice itself.

> This double effect of subjectivity and objectivity seems to capture a tension that Modernist writers must have felt between the subjective, narrative-internal voice of a narrator with diminished authority and the objective and impersonal voice of a narrator who represents character consciousness omnisciently. In ontological and epistemological terms, this narrator can no longer be unequivocally considered an omniscient extradiegetic figure, but must also be capable of embodying a figure with limited knowledge of the narrative world and a specific deictic and evaluative stance which is not impersonal.
>
> *(Sotirova 2020: 93)*

Sotirova suggests that this view of the modernist narrator – one made clear only through in-depth stylistic analysis – challenges the parameters of previous narratological models and literary theory. In particular, she acknowledges the critical consensus that 'Modernist writing undermines the authority of the narrator' (2020: 96) in its fragmentation of the narrative through multiple viewpoints and represented consciousnesses. However, she highlights how the tensions inherent in a narrator who is detached yet immersive, impersonal yet personalised, omniscient yet unknowing ultimately present an additional layer of narrative complexity that has not yet been addressed in scholarship. To this end, she posits a new way of positioning modernist narrators by suggesting that they co-exist on the same ontological plane as the characters being described, thus allowing for the possibility of fictional characters hearing the narrative describing them and even answering back. Sotirova's explanation for this paradoxical simultaneity better accounts for the co-existence of narratorial omniscience/impartiality and limited narratorial knowledge/personalised judgement which could not be accommodated particularly easily (if at all) by existing narratological models alone. Moreover, it paves the way for clearer understanding of how modernist tensions fed directly into the ontological and epistemological disturbances characteristic of postmodernism (something we will return to in Section 3.3.3).

Of course, it is worth bearing in mind that stylistic analysis does not require you to reinvent the critical wheel in your own research. Although Sotirova combined her detailed study of the language and style of modernist fiction with theoretical concepts grounded in narratology in order to put forward an innovative conceptualisation of narrative positioning, blending these facets would have provided an equally illuminating analysis of the selected literary texts at a surface level too. You might find it useful to think about this in terms of the style of narrative discourse; that is, how your knowledge of language can be applied to the level of narration

specifically and what this reveals about the role, position or voice of the narrator (and reader) within an overall text.

3.3.2 Implicating the real reader

It goes without saying that narrators are a key part of narrative theory; they are, after all, the ones telling the story. As seen in the previous section, stylistics provides a useful toolkit for analysing how narrators are linguistically positioned within a narrative and what that means for the way that narrative is communicated. However, one must also acknowledge the presence and position of another figure in the narrative process: the reader. As Wolfgang Iser says at the beginning of *The Act of Reading*, 'a literary text can only produce a response when it is read' (1991: ix).

Figure 3.3 delineates the different roles involved in the reading process, assimilating the work of many narrative theorists in doing so. As shown in Figure 3.3, the real author and real reader exist outside the text, while the 'teller' role(s) within the text can be separated into the extrafictional voice, implied author and narrator. Taking Mary Shelley as an example, Stockwell (2020: 50) explains that readers have an idea of 'a real historical person who wrote *Frankenstein*' based on extrafictional information related to literary criticism, historical accounts, textbooks, Wikipedia, and so on. Combining our contextual and historical knowledge of Shelley allows us to construct a mental representation of the 'real' author, even if our conceptualisation is only partially accurate – if at all! Most importantly, our mental construction of Shelley is inevitably very different from the figure telling the story within *Frankenstein*, that narrator being Shelley's fictional invention. Straddling the gap between the extrafictional voice and the narrator, however, is the implied author: 'the mental

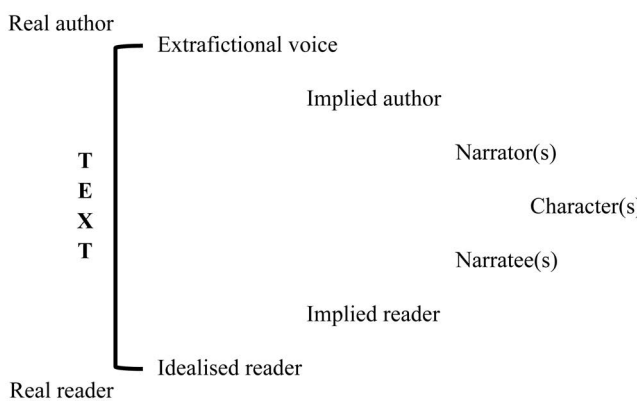

FIGURE 3.3 Teller and receptor roles in a text

picture of the author that a reader constructs *on the basis of the text in its entirety*' (Toolan 2001: 65; emphasis added). Although there is bound to be some overlap between the extrafictional voice and the implied author, the latter is informed by a specific text – that is, what kind of author does the text imply is writing it. Again using Shelley as an example, we can consider how her different works evoke different implied authors, even if the extrafictional voice is the same. The implied author of *The Last Man* (1826), for instance, is not the same implied author as *Frankenstein* (1818) as her later novel explores different thematic concerns through a different writing style.

The same distinction can be made between the roles represented on the reader – or receptor – side of Figure 3.3. The narratee refers to figures addressed within the text, whether that's characters speaking to other characters or the contextual audience of the narrator. Conversely, the implied reader has access to *all* the elements directed towards different narratees and can be thought of as 'the reader to whom the novel is directed' (Stockwell 2020: 51) or 'the archetypal reader that real readers assume the text has or had in mind as its audience' (Toolan 2001: 68). The implied reader is thus likely to be ascribed with characteristics, beliefs or knowledge to supplement a successful reading of the text in its entirety. Of course, those characteristics may not have any bearing on the actual reading audience and individual readers are likely to interpret a single text in many different ways. To accommodate this, the idealised reader exists as a combination or representation of all possible readings.

Although the entities depicted in Figure 3.3 provide useful structural descriptions of narrative levels and roles within a text, it is important to remember that they are inescapably informed by the perceiving consciousness of the real reader. 'All of the entities inwards from the extrafictional voice and the idealised reader have their linguistic traces in the text, and are shaped by patterns in the text, but they are constructs within the mind of the reader' (Stockwell 2020: 51). An intriguing angle of analysis therefore rests on a) the overlap or blurring between these different entities; b) how textual depictions are informed, influenced or even exacerbated by the real reader's mental construction; and c) how real authors can use this to their advantage to impact or affect an audience. The following section of this chapter, therefore, considers how narratives can trigger real-world readerly interaction and effect through the use of the second-person pronoun, using research by Sandrine Sorlin (2022, 2024) as its base.

In *The Stylistics of 'You'* (2022), Sorlin explores the linguistic functions and effects of 'you' in relation to a wide range of genres including advertisements, political slogans, creative essays, tweets, and YouTube videos in addition to literary examples from the likes of Charlotte Brontë, George Orwell, Paul Auster, Henry Fielding, and many others. Through this varied study, Sorlin adapts Kluge's 'continuum of reference' (Figure 3.2) to account more easily for written narratives where authors and readers do not share the same ontological plane. Sorlin's model thus moves from

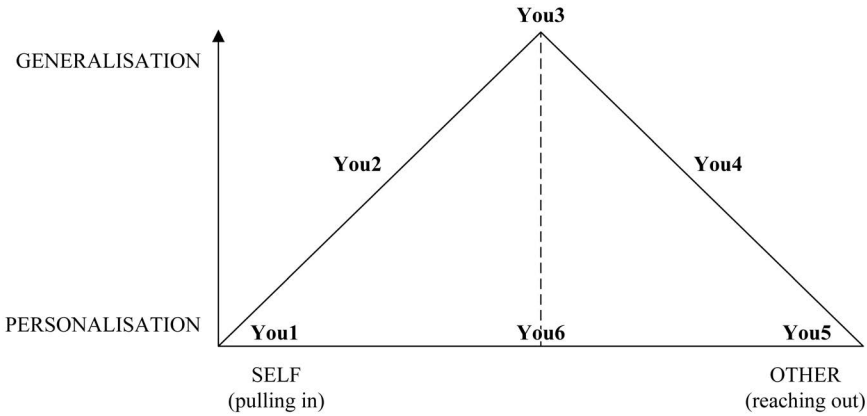

FIGURE 3.4 The six points of reference in 'you' narratives

Source: Sorlin (2022: 16), reproduced with permission from *The Stylistics of 'You'* by Sandrine Sorlin.

reference to SELF at the left of Figure 3.4 – for narratives where 'you' actually means 'I' (You1) – to OTHER where 'you' functions as a traditional deictic address to someone separate to 'I' (e.g. You5 being a clearly identified narratee). She also adds a vertical variable to indicate the personal vs. generic nature of second-person referents, and subsequently adds You6 to denote 'an individualised, identifiable person/character while You3, given the degree of genericity, could refer to anyone, including both speaker and addressee or neither of them' (2024: 3–4).

Additionally, Sorlin acknowledges that referents may change throughout a narrative and that pronouns can lack stability. Just because 'you' is used in a particular way at one point in the narrative, this does not guarantee it will be used in that way every time, nor that you can assume the intended referent straight away. Italo Calvino's *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller* springs to mind as a prime example. At the beginning of the novel, the reader is introduced to a protagonist who is likewise 'about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel' (Calvino 1998: 3), and readers are initially encouraged to align themselves with the 'you' figure described. As the story progresses, however, the references to 'you' become increasingly specific until the point at which it is obvious that 'you' must refer to an entirely fictional character and does not overlap with the real reader in any way at all.

With this in mind, we will now draw on Sorlin's research to demonstrate how second-person narratives can be used to implicate the reader and therein encourage real-world effect. As an informative case study, we will consider the use of 'you' in an essay by the West Indian writer Jamaica Kincaid who, Sorlin argues, uses the second-person pronoun as a stylistic vector through which (white Western) readers are forced to recognise racism. An example of Kincaid's creative non-fiction,

A Small Place (1988) is a book-length essay presented in the guise of a travel guide through which the author vents about the post-colonial tourist industry in her homeland. She initially does this by forcing the reader to align themselves with the role of an 'ugly tourist' and uses the first chapter of the essay to describe 'your' arrival at the island.

> You disembark from your plane. You go through customs. Since you are a tourist, a North American or European – to be frank, white – and not an Antiguan black returning to Antigua from Europe or North America with cardboard boxes of much needed cheap clothes and food for relatives, you move through customs swiftly, you move through customs with ease. Your bags are not searched.
>
> *(Kincaid 1988: 4–5)*

Sorlin highlights the clear addressee-orientation of Kincaid's essay and explains how the reader is unable to escape the label assigned to them, with phrases such as 'you the tourist', 'you become a tourist' or 'you are a tourist' occurring 12 times in the 17 pages that form the first chapter of the essay. More importantly, these ascriptions always come with a strongly negative assessment, e.g. 'An ugly thing, that is what you are when you become a tourist, an ugly, empty thing, a stupid thing, a piece of rubbish pausing here and there to gaze at this and taste that' (Kincaid 1988: 17). The pervasive use of the second-person thus offers a searing critique of the kind of white, Western tourists who view Kincaid's home of Antigua as nothing more than a paradisial holiday destination, and who are unwilling to look beyond that to see the day-to-day tribulations and post-colonial damage in front of their unseeing eyes. Through this, the reader is interpolated with the tourist described in the text and subsequently forced to recognise themselves in the tourist's performative actions.

> You see yourself talking a walk on that beach, you see yourself meeting new people (only they are new in a very limited way, for they are people just like you). You see yourself eating some delicious, locally grown food. You must not wonder what exactly happened to the contents of your lavatory when you flushed it. You mut not wonder where your bathwater went when you pulled out the stopper. You must not wonder what happened when you brushed your teeth. Oh, it might all end up in the water you are thinking of taking a swim in; the contents of your lavatory might, just might, graze gently against your ankle as you wade carefree in the water, for you see, in Antigua, there is no proper sewage-disposal system.
>
> *(Kincaid 1988: 13–14)*

In addition to the aforementioned use of 'you', the repeated negated deontic modal phrase 'must not' forces readers to recognise the tourist's – and their

own – denial. Given that negation results in information being 'retained in the ongoing mental representation' (Nahajec 2009: 115) rather than discarded entirely, Sorlin argues that the sense of obligation evoked on the part of the tourist here balances a fine line between what the tourist 'must' ignore and what the reader of *A Small Place* ultimately cannot. 'In the mirror Kincaid holds up before the readers, she is intent that they recognise themselves in this narrative reflection' (Sorlin 2022: 175). This becomes even more evident – and hard-hitting – in the sentence directly after the previous extract: 'But the Caribbean Sea is very big and the Atlantic Ocean is even bigger; it would amaze even you to know the number of black slaves this ocean has swallowed up' (Kincaid 1988: 14). Although passed over somewhat glibly in favour of describing how 'you' shouldn't think about how most of the classic Antiguan food sold to tourists actually comes from Miami, such comments creep past the ignorance and arrogance of the tourist and remind the real reader of the broader, post-colonial context. While the tourist may want to overlook the 'ugly' in favour of a picturebook holiday, we as readers become complicit in the oppression, trauma and colonial treatment of the Antiguan people if we do the same.

In this first chapter of *A Small Place*, the 'you' reference has the deictic force of You4. Sorlin explains that it refers to a subset of the 'authorial audience' and encourages readerly alignment with 'you, the tourist'; this is helped by the fact that most readers will have been a tourist at some point in their life and can self-ascribe themselves with the role of 'the tourist', and thus step into the position opened in the discourse by 'you'. That said, when 'you' refers to an authorial audience in fictional texts, it is usually presumed that this 'you' embodies some kind of universal reader that circumvents specific characteristics related to class, gender or race. However, in the case of Kincaid's 'you', the referent is deliberately prevented from reaching such universality and is instead given explicit attributes – namely that 'you' is white and likely middle class. In doing so, Kincaid performs an unmitigated Face Threatening Act that 'compels [readers] to align with the tourist's perspective' (Sorlin 2022: 176), even if they do not want to do so.

This changes slightly in the second chapter of the essay, where Kincaid instead focuses on the island as she knew it in a more directly conversational manner: 'The Antigua that I knew, the Antigua in which I grew up, is not the Antigua you, a tourist, would see now' (Kincaid 1988: 23). The definite article used in the first chapter to categorise the reader as 'the tourist' transitions here into an indefinite reference to 'a tourist' who is then brought into the narrative not through forced alignment, but through a genuine invitation to join in: 'But let me show you the Antigua that I used to know' (Kincaid 1988: 24). From here, the reader is engaged through interrogatives and purported dialogue on the part of the 'I' narrator who is interpreted to be (at least a version of) Kincaid herself. This does not remove the underlying critique, however, and Sorlin highlights

how deictic shifts are used to admonish Western readers who have benefited from colonisation. Compare the following extract from the second chapter of *A Small Place* to the previous examples:

> Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank accounts? […] You will have to accept that this is mostly your fault. Let me just show you how you looked to us. You came. You took things that were not yours, and you did not even, for appearances' sake, ask first.
>
> *(Kincaid 1988: 34–35)*

Although the 'you' addressed in this extract is perhaps more generic than 'you, the tourist' in the first chapter of the essay, there is still a thematic alignment between the tourist's race (and suggested class) and the blame assigned to the reader here. 'You came. You took things' quickly progresses to 'You murdered people. You imprisoned people. You robbed people' (Kincaid 1988: 35), with the repeated second-person subject placing the responsibility of these actions at the feet of the authorial audience. Even though modern Western readers of this essay did not have a direct hand in their ancestors' crimes, the accusations encoded here in the use of 'you' reach out beyond the page and ultimately implicate the real, present-day reader too.

From here you might consider broader questions about readerly impact, especially as questions related to reader response theory are common in stylistics, although they often try to move away from the text as a critical focus and instead prioritise its external affective power. With its foundational interest in structure and form, narratology perhaps provides a useful middle ground for considering how and why a text is able to affect a reader through, for example, textual implication and pronominal reference *within* a narrative. With this in mind, Sorlin evidences the 'chameleon-like nature of *you* weaving its ways through different references, categories, discourses and narratological levels' (2024: 16). You could likely achieve a similar result by looking only at the linguistic functions of 'you' in Kincaid's essay, but an underlying understanding of narratology enriches this further. Thinking, for instance, about how diegetic levels are constructed and subsequently crossed allows you to consider the diegetic placement and participation not only of the narrator but also the reader, which can then be mapped onto the entities outlined in Figure 3.3. In the case of *A Small Place*, this elucidates our linguistic analysis of Kincaid's style while accounting for the affective power of 'you' as a vector that implicates and engages the real reader, '[joggling readers] between attributing and enacting a consciousness, which incites them both to reflect on and experience the predicament of *you*' (Sorlin 2024: 16).

3.3.3 Storytelling and engagement in children's literature

Combining elements of the previous case studies, this section explores how oral storytelling strategies can be adapted for the written page to engage younger readers specifically. Based on the doctoral research of Ella Wydrzynska (2023), we will focus on the opening prologue of a best-selling novel aimed at middle grade readers aged approximately 8–12 years. Through this, we will consider how younger audiences are brought into a dramatised storytelling scenario as soon as they open the book and what this might mean for children's reading engagement. With this in mind, consider the following extract which begins the first book in Cressida Cowell's *The Wizards of Once* series:

> Once there was Magic.
> It was a long, long time ago, in a British Isles so old it did not know it was the British Isles yet, and the Magic lived in the dark forests.
> Perhaps you feel that you know what a dark forest looks like.
> Well, I can tell you right now that you don't.
>
> *(Cowell 2017: 11)*

From the very beginning, readers are placed firmly in the world of storytelling. The phrase 'Once there was…' is a recognisable marker of fiction that triggers readers' schematic knowledge of fairy tales and stories, and likewise indicates that the book is likely to include some of the archetypal features of such genres: magic, adventure, good vs. evil, a happily-ever-after ending, and so on. Of course, the extent to which this book actually does feature such stock fairy tale characteristics is another question entirely; the point here is that the opening line primes the reader to expect a traditional fairy tale. This is then solidified in the following sentence – 'It was a long, long time ago' – which likewise elicits the reader's schematic knowledge of traditional tales.

The first two sentences of the above extract therefore establish a clear storytelling event, but Wydrzynska notes that it initially appears to be told in the simple past by an unidentified, possibly omniscient narrator without any reference to the reader at all. That is, until the third sentence when the tone becomes much more conversational: 'Perhaps you feel that you know what a dark forest looks like'. Here the narration moves into the simple present and appears to be directed to readers themselves with the introduction of the second-person pronoun. This is a prime example of David Herman's (1994) doubly deictic 'you' which simultaneously indexes a fictional audience within the narrative – a story-world participant or intradiegetic narratee – in addition to an actualised reader outside the text. The reader in the real world, who is holding a physical copy of Cowell's novel in their hands and reading the above extract as part of their introduction to the story, is implicated by the illusion of direct address from the story's fictional narrator and subsequently begins to enact the same thought process as the story-world narratee. The perception verb

'feel' also helps to put the reader firmly in the action seat of the sentence, although we must acknowledge that the reader is placed there entirely (and cleverly) by the narrator. Indeed, prior to this moment, readers may not have ever given much thought as to 'what a dark forest looks like', but suddenly they are being told that they do, in fact, feel as if they already have this knowledge. They may even take umbrage with the fact the narrator seems to doubt them! This is all put into the reader's head by the fictional narrator, but it inevitably forces the real reader to think about what they *do* imagine a dark forest would look like – only to be told that whatever they're picturing is wrong a sentence later.

As this opening section of the novel progresses, the narrator continues to describe the dark forest in more detail, but more often than not still relies on a stark contrast between the (incorrect) mental image conjured by the reader and the 'reality' of the historical forest, e.g. 'These were forests darker than you would believe possible' or 'they stretched as far in every direction as you can possibly imagine' (Cowell 2017: 11). Although still very much in the audience role of the storytelling process, this prompts readers to engage with the world-building and construction of the story, and allows individuals' imagination to run free – something which Wydrzynska argues is particularly key in children's literature and reading development.

The involvement of the reader in this way is actively encouraged through the use of the second-person pronoun, but it also gives the narrative an overtly oral quality. Although 'you' here could initially be viewed as a relatively generic reference to a You4-style authorial audience, it soon becomes apparent that this 'you' is being addressed by a personalised speaker when 'I' is introduced in the fourth sentence. By the narrator's own admission, they are 'a character in this story' (Cowell 2017: 16) but refrain from revealing their identity, instead inviting readers to try and work it out as they read the novel. Following Genette's terminology, we might initially categorise this as an intradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator who, while present (albeit to a limited extent) in the story, is not one of the protagonists and instead seems to have omniscient access to other characters' internal thoughts, which are likewise presented in the third-person. Indeed, Wydrzynska draws a clear distinction between the narrative discourse in *The Wizards of Once*, where 'I' appears frequently and speaks directly to 'you' in the present tense, as per the example above, and the main story which is told in the simple past with third-person reference to diegetic characters. Drawing on the structural concerns of narratology, she describes an overt level of composition in which the story is contextually told (or written) in real-time as the narration progresses, and within which the main story is embedded; this is represented in Figure 3.5.

Crucially, the composition level – akin to Genette's narrative discourse – is typified by overtly oral narration, which we see in the opening extract from *The Wizards of Once*. The verb of utterance, 'tell', in the fourth sentence draws attention to the (verbal) act of narration and, through the simple present, is indicative of a shared language space occupied by the reader ('you') and narrator ('I'). The use

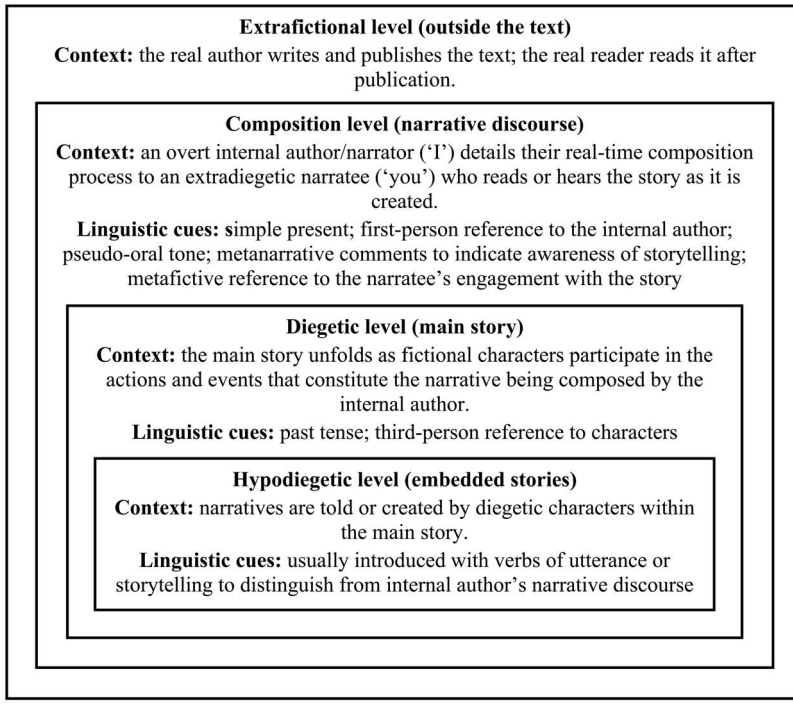
Extrafictional level (outside the text)
Context: the real author writes and publishes the text; the real reader reads it after publication.
Composition level (narrative discourse)
Context: an overt internal author/narrator ('I') details their real-time composition process to an extradiegetic narratee ('you') who reads or hears the story as it is created.
Linguistic cues: simple present; first-person reference to the internal author; pseudo-oral tone; metanarrative comments to indicate awareness of storytelling; metafictive reference to the narratee's engagement with the story
Diegetic level (main story)
Context: the main story unfolds as fictional characters participate in the actions and events that constitute the narrative being composed by the internal author.
Linguistic cues: past tense; third-person reference to characters
Hypodiegetic level (embedded stories)
Context: narratives are told or created by diegetic characters within the main story.
Linguistic cues: usually introduced with verbs of utterance or storytelling to distinguish from internal author's narrative discourse

FIGURE 3.5 Embedded narrative levels in metafictive children's books

Source: Based on Wydrzynska (2023: 102).

of an oral discourse marker such as 'well' strengthens this further. Interestingly, such simulated orality in written texts – that is, when there is an overt, pseudo-oral narrator explicitly *telling* the story – is commonly linked to *skaz*, a term associated with the Russian Formalists after Boris Ėjxenbaum's 1918 essay, 'The Illusion of *Skaz*'. Unlike conventional first-person narratives which address no one in particular, *skaz* narratives feature a narrator who 'addresses the tale to some audience, whose presence is linguistically reflected in the tale itself' (Banfield 1982: 172). Importantly, *skaz* offers a 'form of narrative prose which, in vocabulary, syntax, and choice of speech rhythms, displays an orientation towards the narrator's oral speech' (Ėjxenbaum 1975 [1925]: 214). This is most often typified by the use of colloquialisms emblematic of oral discourse; purported spontaneity, as if the narrative has not been fully thought out or prepared before it is told; limited understanding, naïveté or clumsiness due to the narrator's inability to go beyond their own viewpoint or control external aspects of their discourse; where necessary, the use of represented accents or dialects; and the orientation of the narrator towards a listener or audience, with the ability to create a dialogue between textually encoded interlocutors (Schmid 2014).

This pseudo-oral type of narrative discourse is seen in abundance in Cowell's novels, particularly in her *Wizards of Once* series. In her research, Wydrzynska notes the importance of establishing this overt storytelling scenario at the very beginning of the novel as it means that, even when 'you' fades into the background as the main story begins, the idea that an audience is listening to a voice telling the story in real-time remains strong in the reader's mind. Combining this oral quality with the ostentatiously fairy tale-inspired opening and encouragement of the reader to imagine the type of magical land familiar to them from other fantasy stories ultimately creates the mental picture of a shared story event in which, perhaps, a communal audience has gathered a round a campfire to listen to a real-life storyteller recounting a fantastical folk tale. When translated into the written form and printed on the pages of a physical book, readers are aligned with the 'you' addressed by the narrator at the composition level, and are thus are able to experience the novel as if 'I' is talking to them directly.

However, such stylised orality is not exclusive to Cowell. In fact, it is common across children's literature, with multiple critics highlighting the prevalent use of oral narratives as a way of mirroring archetypal fairy tales or nursery rhymes with which younger readers are likely to be familiar through early engagement with narratives, read-aloud events, televised storytelling and so on (e.g. Arizpe et al. 2010; Sipe 2008; Thacker and Webb 2002; Wall 1991; Zipes 1979). Chambers (1985: 40), for instance, identifies the recognisable voice of 'a friendly adult storyteller' who keeps children entertained while shepherding them carefully through the fiction. There is certainly some truth in Chambers' summary, especially when middle grade texts are so often used to bridge the gap between books for younger readers – which are typically read by an adult to a child – and material which children are more likely to read independently. However, Wydrzynska argues that it is overly simplistic to assume that this kind of oral narration exists only to accommodate inexperienced or developing child-readers. Instead, she positions such material under the umbrella of postmodernism and metafiction, highlighting the boundary-breaking narrative strategies and inherently interactive linguistic devices commonly found in highbrow experimental fiction *and* mainstream children's literature equally.

With this in mind, consider again the opening of Cowell's *The Wizards of Once* and the dialogic interaction between 'I' and 'you'. Although still very much in a safe, storytelling scenario, the purported conversation between the fictional narrator and the reader (by way of a text-internal audience who are equally implicated by the doubly deictic second-person pronoun) logically breaks the external narrative boundary separating fiction from reality. This is typical of metafiction (Waugh 1984) and, at the very least, opens the door for the complex blurring of what is real and what is not, especially as Cowell claims that the dark forests and magic described are genuine – albeit forgotten – parts of Britain's history. Indeed, it becomes a key tenet of *The Wizards of Once* series that not only are the books' fictional protagonists just as real and historically valid as the Romans, Vikings or Tudors

in Britain, but that Cowell herself has been asked to translate a real text for publication based on her previous experience and expertise with the best-selling *How to Train Your Dragon* series (see Wydrzynska 2023: 116–118).

Child-readers are thus forced to navigate a strange conflation of ontologies. Not only are they being addressed by a character-narrator from within the pages of the book they are reading, but their extrafictional knowledge of Cowell is implicated within the fiction by her contextual role as the translator of an apparently real text that – beyond the clearly fantastical involvement of magic, wizards, witches and sentient spoons – literally primes readers to *expect* a fairy tale in its opening words. Wydrzynska highlights the sophisticated reading strategies that children must enact in order to navigate this successfully, but also points out the potentially paradoxical use of metafiction in engaging younger readers. While metafiction is conventionally understood as being deliberately obtrusive, often pushing readers out of the story through pervasive reminders of the text's artifice and thus preventing absorbed reading, Wydrzynska posits that the composition level in children's metafiction acts as a convenient stepping stone between fiction and reality. She argues that blurring fiction and reality in this way effectively allows the audience to engage in a dramatised storytelling scenario in which they are ostentatiously cast as 'the reader of the text'. This is exemplified by the prevalent conversation between 'I' and 'you' within the narrative discourse, but is simultaneously enacted in the real-world by the real reader's ongoing reading activity.

Although Wydrzynska's research is grounded in linguistic analysis of personal pronouns, tense, viewpoint, and so on, it is undoubtedly facilitated by narratological methods that allow her to investigate the structure of interwoven diegetic levels and thus introduce questions related to readerly immersion and engagement on the part of the child-audience. In this way, as with the previous two case studies, Wydrzynska's work is made possible only through the combination of stylistics and narratology.

3.4 Concluding remarks

Although this chapter began by outlining some of the differences between the two disciplines, we hope to have demonstrated the complementarity of stylistics and narratology in elucidating textual analysis by way of our selected case studies. The ability to think about both language and form when studying style ultimately expands our metaphorical stylistic toolkit. You may even be surprised that any scholar would ever consider these to be separate aspects for analysis in the first place! Of course, 'some stylisticians treat narratology not as an independent discipline, but as part of stylistics' (Shen 2023: 214), and this is a belief which we likewise heartily promote. There is certainly more work to be done in this regard, but Shen remains optimistic: 'It is hoped that with a clearer awareness of the complementarity between narratological "discourse" and "style" more conscious effort will be made towards combining the concerns of narratology and stylistics in narrative criticism' (2023: 214–215).

The main takeaway at this point is that any narrative – indeed, any text – inevitably draws on linguistic and structural aspects. As researchers and analysts, you would be selling yourself short by overlooking one in favour of the other and treating 'style' and 'discourse' as wholly separate factors in a text's composition, construction and affective power. Narratological stylistics thus offers a logical, compelling and text-rich analytical approach that combines close reading skills, detailed linguistic analysis, structural knowledge and subsequent extrafictional impact to provide a fuller picture of how a text is put together and how it creates (and conveys) meaning.

Moreover, for researchers who are perhaps newer to stylistics or want to prioritise the text as their singular critical focus, the kind of analytical approach outlined here is a useful starting point. While the following chapters in this book will highlight the range of topics covered in stylistics by introducing you to cognition, empirical research, media discourse, corpus methods, education and creative writing, don't overlook the joy (and skill!) in the close reading of a text. Grounding this kind of analysis in textual evidence to satisfy the three Rs of stylistics (Simpson 2014: 4; see Chapter 1, Section 1.1) is imperative, and stylistics and narratology go hand-in-hand to facilitate this. If you build up your textual analysis and interpretations from your knowledge of language, form and structure, you can't go far wrong. From here, you might then consider how narratological stylistics can be applied to a range of other texts too. Although this chapter focused on prose (whether fiction or non-fiction), future developments in this area could include digital narratives, song lyrics, theatre, film and TV, advertising, audiobooks, YouTube videos, comics and graphic novels, social media posts, and so much more. Narratological stylistics provides you with the foundational tools for the analysis of basically any text; the choice is now yours for what you do with it!

3.5 Further reading

Accessible overviews of narratological terminology, methods, and theories can be found in Bal (2017), Fludernik (2009), Prince (2003), and Toolan (2001). Hühn et al.'s *Handbook of Narratology* (2014) provides a systematic overview of the discipline and has been conveniently digitised by the University of Hamburg as 'The *Living* Handbook of Narratology' (www-archiv.fdm.uni-hamburg.de/lhn). For more on the complementary relationship between stylistics and narratology, we particularly recommend Shen (2024).

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4

COGNITIVE STYLISTICS

In this chapter, we will consider

- **how cognitive stylistics is defined, its relationship with cognitive linguistics and cognitive psychology, and its scope within stylistics;**
- **key theories, concepts, and methods in cognitive stylistics;**
- **how these areas align with more general areas of stylistic study.**

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 What is cognitive stylistics?

In many ways, cognitive stylistics is no different to other forms of stylistic practice in that it maintains a close focus on language and adheres to the principle of Simpson's 3Rs (rigorous, replicable, retrievable) that we outlined in Chapter 1. So, like other strands of stylistics (such as those in this handbook and other areas as feminist stylistics, ecostylistics, and so on), the basic parameters of study remain the same. Cognitive stylistics is different, however, in that it draws specifically on another body of knowledge and imports its concepts and methods to sit alongside these principles of stylistics. This body of knowledge comes from two connected disciplines: cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics. We begin this section with a very brief overview of both before outlining the ways that they have fed into stylistic scholarship and practice.

Cognitive stylistics draws on ideas from cognitive psychology about the mind and how knowledge is structured and organised. For example, one key idea is that the mind conceptualises and organises knowledge in terms of *domains* or *schemas*. This idea has been used extensively in cognitive stylistics to examine the

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ways in which readers draw on different kinds of background knowledge when interpreting texts. Readers will have different degrees of schematic knowledge, and this can account for more idiosyncratic or developed interpretations. In turn, schemas themselves may be developed, reconfigured or altered as knowledge of a topic may change throughout reading. For example, reading Dickens' *Bleak House* might enrich our knowledge of London in the 19th century. In stylistics, schema theory (Rumelhart 1975; Schank 1982; Schank and Abelson 1977) has also been used to explain our knowledge of and about books themselves and the narrative strategies within them, what Mason (2019) calls 'narrative schemas'. For example, reading more of Shakespeare's history plays will change in some way a reader's 'Shakespeare schema', a reader's 'history play' schema, a reader's 'early modern drama' schema, and so on. The notion of schemas is also key to discourse grammars such as Text World Theory, which we introduced in Chapter 2 (see also Section 3.2.5).

Cognitive linguistics is a broad sub-discipline that itself draws on cognitive psychology to examine the connection between the mind and language. Cognitive linguistics emerged during the 1970s and 80s when researchers began to move away from more formal models of linguistic theory to explore the embodied and contextualised nature of language. One of the central premises in cognitive linguistics is that cognition arises from embodiment, our perceptual and social interaction with the physical world, and is then reflected in the way we represent conceived events using language. Equally central are what Lakoff (1990: 40) terms 'primary commitments': a *cognitive commitment* that models language as an extension of other activities that we engage in and use to make sense of our surroundings and experiences; and a *generalization commitment* that claims that all levels of language (discourse, grammar, lexis) can be analysed using cognitive insights.

In practice, cognitive linguistics is more of an 'approach' (Tyler 2012: 3) than it is a single unified theory but can be broadly divided along two distinctive lines. First, cognitive semantics, which examines how language reflects broader organisational principles of the mind, and second cognitive grammar, which examines the underlying patterns of linguistic form that import with them specific meanings. Schema theory, explained earlier in this chapter is a good example of the former, while Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008 and see Section 3.2.4), which gives prominence to the meaningfulness of particular grammatical representations, exemplifies the latter. Given both cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics have strong empirical as well as theoretical aspects, they provide a solid platform for stylisticians, and it is no surprise that modern stylistic scholarship has followed the 'cognitive turn' in the social sciences and humanities more broadly over the last thirty years. Stylistics has always embraced progressive and socially-oriented models of language to provide its analytical tools, and the cognitive sciences together have added to these tools in new and valuable ways.

4.1.2 Cognitive stylistics or cognitive poetics?

Sometimes cognitive stylistics is also referred to as 'cognitive poetics', a term which emphasises the focus on readers and interpretation (poetics) more sharply than cognitive stylistics does. Originally used by Tsur (e.g. Tsur 2008), it has come to be most associated with the work of Peter Stockwell. Stockwell's *Cognitive Poetics*: *An Introduction* (Stockwell 2002; 2020) has had a significant impact on the shape and direction of research in cognitive stylistics in recent years and we would thoroughly recommend it to anyone interested in wanting a more extended coverage of this area than we can provide in this chapter. Some of the key parameters of cognitive poetics outlined by Stockwell in the opening chapter of his book are that

1 Language is not simply a set of formal rules but an overall communicative experience that occurs when humans engage with each other (and when they read texts). There is no distinction as such between text and context since the situations in which we experience language are effectively part of the phenomena of language itself.
2 Literary texts are not a separate form of language; literary language is produced and interpreted in the same way as any other kind of language. In turn when we speak about a literary experience, we really are talking about how the interaction or transaction (Rosenblatt 1994) between reader and text. Readers are therefore central to the study of literature and literary phenomena.
3 Readers' initial responses to a text or 'interpretations' emerge as soon as we encounter a text and develop dynamically until we reach a more fully developed and satisfying sense of meaning or 'reading'. We use textual cues and aspects to which our attention is drawn to inform and guide these initial interpretations and more developed readings. In this way, engaging with the language of literature mirrors our response to attentional phenomena that influence our everyday interaction in the world (e.g. we are drawn to and attach significance to material things that are loud, colourful, close to us, and so on).
4 What a text *means* really depends on its 'use'. The inseparable nature of text and context means that the situations in which we read, and with/to whom we read, will always impact on what we think a text means. For example, the same poem may well mean something very different when read in a university seminar to when read in a personal context. Context, then, has a much broader sense than might typically be found in literary criticism where it tends to be focused on the social, cultural and historical aspects related to production, and crucially extends out to consider aspects of a reader's background, their knowledge, their memories, their time and place of reading, and so on.

We now exemplify some of these ideas using 'The Haunting', a poem by Lisa Simpson from her collection *Birdsong* (Simpson 2022). The poem is reprinted below and the comments that follow all arose from group discussion in a seminar group on an MA module on cognitive stylistics that we run at Aston. As you read

them, you could consider how you might develop some research questions and possible areas for study around the comments.

The Haunting

I see these things.

The bundle of cards written for your friends last Christmas
are still languishing on the shelf,
tucked between the biscuit tin and the fake eucalyptus plant.
One mislaid swab and love notes to friends went undelivered,
forgotten.

At the bottom of your jewellery box,
there are bracelets for three best friends, with
butterflies in lavender, yellow, and blue. I helped
to tie the elastic. It was just Day Two and
you missed them.

Sometimes
I still hear your name being called out, laughter,
a friend running along a mossy path outside,
whilst you stand and weave soundlessly through the glass.

We kept our distance and as the days slipped away
I watched as we did too. In the darkness, your shadow loomed.
Did I whisper you into a ghost?
When they couldn't reach you and hold your hand,
Did you just float away?

(Simpson 2022)

The title of a poem is always important and may often be used as a 'way in' to the poem, activating particular types of schemas. For some readers 'The Haunting' may make the poem automatically feel like a sad one, an initial interpretation (using Stockwell's term) that could be influenced by lexical items such as 'languishing', 'undelivered', 'forgotten', 'slipped', 'darkness', 'shadow', 'loomed', 'ghost', and 'float away', all of which evoke absence and loss. Of course, these initial responses are often personal and emotional, and some readers might feel more immersed in the poem than others. It is often difficult to pin down why this might be, but we can try to explore how language is used to position (Stockwell 2013) us in a certain way and how our own experiences and backgrounds might also shape these interpretations. In Stockwell's terms, we need to look at the text and reader together in the experience of reading.

We can also explore words and ideas that seemed to stand out in the poem (in Chapter 1, we referred to this 'foregrounding' as an essential idea in stylistics). In this poem, forgotten', 'you missed them', and 'Sometimes' are positioned at the end or beginning of a verse paragraph on their own and so attract our attention. We can discuss the significance of these words in the context of the poem more widely but also reflect on how the foregrounding affects us as readers, connected to more basic ideas about attention. The poem also depicts physical and material senses (seeing, hearing, feeling) and descriptions of actions, e.g. 'running along a mossy path outside'. The depiction of these scenes encourages us to run a kind of internal simulation of those scenes since we know that when we read descriptions of actions the brain processes that information in the same way as it would process actually carrying out that action.

Some readers might recognise at some point that this poem indexes the Covid-19/pandemic lockdown, for example in the references to 'swab' and 'Day Two'. For some, this might completely change the meaning of the poem or adjust their poem schema. They might also use knowledge and experience of Covid-19 to help understand the poem, including possibly empathizing with the speaker's plight. Of course, not everyone had the same experience of Covid/lockdown, and this means that readers might be drawn to different aspects of the poem and interpret the poem's 'you' in different ways, e.g. the referent could range from a young child to an elderly relative. A 'Covid schema' then is both personal and shared and may be reshaped through reading. In this instance, a reader's own experience of the pandemic and their awareness of the experience of others might be slightly or radically altered by reading 'The Haunting'.

Keeping in mind how Stockwell discusses the need to see context as more than simply about the text's production, we might consider how this poem could be read in different contexts (in a seminar, at home, in a hurry, taking our time, on our own, with others, etc.) and how these contexts would all influence interpretation(s) and reading of the poem. Clearly, we might also want to attribute different meanings to the poem in these different contexts. For example, the poem might have a more personal meaning that we wouldn't want to share in public; in a university seminar, we might want to pursue a different line of argument about meaning that is more clearly aligned to academic conventions and expectations.

Finally, we should point out that while we are focusing on cognitive stylistics in this chapter, there is another associated area of scholarship and research called *cognitive literary studies* (e.g. Zunshine 2015). There is some overlap between the two but for us the crucial difference is that cognitive literary studies focus less explicitly, if at all, on issues of language. Research topics in cognitive literary studies tend to draw on methodologies and methods from theoretical or empirical psychology whereas cognitive stylistics is firmly rooted in linguistics.

4.2 Concepts and theories in cognitive stylistics

In this section, we briefly outline some key concepts and theories in cognitive stylistics, which have been imported from cognitive psychology and/or linguistics.

For each one, we provide some examples of key work; some of these are then developed in the extended case studies in Section 3.3.

4.2.1 Figure and ground

The concept of figure and ground derives from cognitive psychology and provides a template to allow us to differentiate between foregrounded (the figure) and backgrounded (the ground) elements. Figure-ground derives from our attentional system more generally and the ways in which patterns position certain aspects of a scene (whether it's a room we're sitting in, a football match we're watching or a book we're reading) as more or less salient. For example, a running footballer or the loud roar of a crowd are figures that attract our attention against the background of other entities in a scene. It's important to note that the relationship between a figure and its ground is dynamic: a figure can be maintained for a length of time, but it can also be replaced by another figure (a different footballer or the blowing of a referee's whistle) and become the ground. Stockwell's (2009) attention-resonance model offers a taxonomy for distinguishing different types of 'attractors', which work to either maintain the existing figure-ground configuration or else rebalance it so that a new figure emerges and the previous one fades into the ground. The following characteristics are based on Stockwell (2009: 25) and work along a cline or binary pair from most to least likely to maintain or initiate a 'figure'.

- *newness* (newly mentioned≫mentioned a long time ago)
- *agency* (engaging in action≫passive)
- *topicality* (subject position in clause≫object position)
- *empathetic responsibility* (human≫animal≫object≫abstraction)
- *definiteness* (definite≫indefinite)
- *activeness* (active verbs≫verbs of cognition and being)
- *brightness* (bright colours≫dimness)
- *fullness* (intensity≫emptiness)
- *largeness* (large≫small)
- *height* (relatively high≫relatively small or overseen)
- *noisiness* (audible≫non-audible)
- *aesthetic distance from the norm* (unconventional≫conventional)

Of course, a text may deliberately keep some aspect in the 'ground' so as to conceal or deny its interpretative significance to readers. To find out more about this phenomenon, you could read Emmott and Alexander's (2014) chapter on what they call 'burying'.

4.2.2 Image schemas

Image schemas are conceptual and largely pre-linguistic templates arising from our embodied experience in a material world. Image schemas develop from a very

early age (Mandler 2004), and extend into ways that we conceptualise and talk about some key concepts such as:

SPACE e.g. UP-DOWN, FRONT-BACK
CONTAINMENT e.g. CONTAINER, IN-OUT
MOVEMENT e.g. SOURCE-PATH-GOAL
FORCE e.g. COMPULSION, DENIAL, REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT
EXISTENCE e.g. SPACE, OBJECT, PROCESS

Image schemas, conventionally presented in small capitals, can be very useful as an analytical tool for researching, for example, the interpretative effects of prepositions, since this word class specifically indexes spatial relationships (see Stockwell 2020: 43–47 for an exemplary analysis). Since metaphors are generally underpinned by image schematic patterns, for example emotions are often described metaphorically in terms of CONTAINMENT ('I'm in love', 'you're in denial', and so on), analysis of these patterns can yield insights into the structure of metaphors. And texts which rely on distinctive types of modal patterning (see, for example, Simpson 1993) may be examined in terms of how they draw on various iterations of the FORCE schema (Johnson 1987: 143–144).

4.2.3 Conceptual metaphor theory

Conceptual Metaphor Theory, henceforth CMT, originates in the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) although has subsequently been refined and reconfigured by numerous scholars. CMT accounts for how we draw on the material world and our own embodied status within it to help us to conceptualise and talk about more abstract ideas. The theory acknowledges the ubiquitous nature of metaphorical expressions and argues that these linguistic realisations are a direct result of how we conceptualise the world. In CMT, a target domain, an area of abstract knowledge is given structure through being conceived through a source domain, a more concrete area of knowledge. For example, western cultures often conceive life (and abstract idea) in terms of a journey (a more concrete one). In this instance aspects of the source domain 'journey', such as a beginning, end, events, and obstacles along the way, are mapped across to give structure to our perception of 'life'. These mappings manifest themselves in expressions like 'I'm starting over', 'I came to a crossroads in my life' and so on and also extend into other domains associated with 'life' such as a career and personal relationships. Importantly, there generally has to be an assumed coherence between source and target domains; for example, conceiving 'life' as a 'fruit' although possible, has less salience given what we know life to be like from experience, and so the mappings in that metaphor would be less logical and less prototypical.

Like image schemas, conceptual metaphors are usually indicated in small capitals in a TARGET IS (A) SOURCE' formula; for example, LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Many

metaphors are also underpinned by image schematic patterns; LIFE IS A JOURNEY is itself predicated on a PATH schema, which models movement from one position to another along a spatial path. A further recent development has been the operationalizing of a 'contextualised' theory of cognitive metaphor, recognising that any metaphorical mapping is also shaped by the various contexts in which discourse is produced and interpreted. For example, Kövecses (2015, 2020) has outlined a model for examining the 'context types' that influence speakers or writers to choose particular metaphors; see also Giovanelli (2022a) who extends this idea alongside Cognitive Grammar into 'construal constraints'.

CMT has been widely used in literary and non-literary stylistic studies and a search of the main journals will give you a good number of articles that you could explore and/or use as the basis for your own research project. You might also be interested in exploring work which draws on blending theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002), a more advanced way of conceiving metaphors which moves beyond the two-domain model to present metaphor as blend of several 'input spaces'.

4.2.4 Cognitive Grammar

Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008), and henceforth CG, is a theory of language which although not originally used in stylistics has now come to be viewed as a powerful model for text analysis. In a similar way to other cognitively oriented grammars and aligned with cognitive linguistic principles more generally, two key central premises of CG are that linguistic structures are inherently meaningful, and that essential properties can be viewed as operating across all levels of language description. Cognitive Grammar draws on the visual analogy of discourse participants or 'conceptualizers' engaged in an act of co-ordinated mental attention on a 'scene' as they speak and listen and/or write and read. The notion of 'construal' (Langacker 2008: 55) is particularly important in CG, drawing attention to the fact that it is the specific grammatical framing or ordering that imports meaning just as much than the conceptual content of the words themselves. For example, we can view the difference between the active and passive voice in the two clauses below not as simply a simple grammatical reconfiguration but as a specific discourse strategy with a clear interpretative effect. In the first, the agent responsible for the action is the clausal subject and has prominence; in the second, agency is downplayed by moving the agent to the end of the clause and repositioning the patient in subject position. The passive voice can therefore be said to inherently impose a certain way in which we view the scene being described.

i The boy kicked the ball
ii The ball was kicked by the boy

Construals may be understood as instances of one of three 'construal phenomena' (Langacker 2008: 55), aligning with either the organisation of the scene, or

the relationship between the conceptualizer(s) and the scene. In Giovanelli and Harrison (2024: 34) these are summarised as

- **Specificity**: The level of precision and detail with which we look at something
- **Focusing and prominence**: The part of a scene we select and on which we place our attention
- **Perspective**: The vantage point in relation to the scene we take when viewing something

Texts can be analysed in terms of these phenomena drawing attention to both writer construals (ways that the text producer wishes to represent a scene) and readerly construals (ways that readers interpret a scene). CG is now an established framework in cognitive stylistics; since the first analysis drawing on CG (Hamilton 2003), exemplary studies can be found in Stockwell (2009), Giovanelli (2013), Harrison et al. (2014), Harrison (2017), Nuttall (2018), Giovanelli et al. (2021), and Giovanelli (2022a). There are also a number of journal articles that draw on CG and you could search for these to see the types of projects that are possible.

4.2.5 Text World Theory

As we outlined in Chapter 2, Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999), and henceforth TWT, is a cognitive discourse grammar and reader response theory that models meaning as co-constructed between discourse participants and champions the importance of context. Drawing on a TEXT IS A WORLD metaphor, TWT is a layered analytical framework that starts with the notion of a 'discourse world', which refers to the situation in which communicative participants come together. In the discourse world, participants draw on various kinds of background knowledge as well as the immediate physical environment they are in to construct discourse. Crucially, in TWT it is the text itself, through the principle of 'text-drivenness' (Werth 1999: 149) which sanctions the activation of particular schemas. In face-to-face communication, speakers generally exist in the same spatial and temporal context but in the majority of literary reading, authors and readers are largely separated in space and or time. In this latter instance, TWT has the notion of a 'split discourse world' (Gavins 2007: 26) to account for this phenomenon.

Second, mental representations or 'text worlds' are built up using textual cues and background knowledge. Text-worlds have both world building elements that outline their spatial and temporal parameters and any characters and objects, and function-advancing propositions that propel the discourse forwards. Finally, attention may be diverted away from a text-world to a new one by temporal and/or spatial shifts (a 'world switch'), the use of modality to express possibility, certainty, obligation or desire (a 'modal world'), or any number of other shifts where a new text-world is introduced via direct speech and thought, negation, hypotheticals or metaphor. Any new text-world becomes the attentional figure against the ground of the previous text-world(s) although a previous text-world may become the figure

again, for example in the case of flashbacks that are temporary or previously mentioned locations being brought back into the main description or action of a text. The model is a dynamic one in that readers track any updates in and across text-worlds as they read, drawing on relevant discourse world knowledge.

The strength of TWT lies in how it can account for the ways that a text positions its readers to navigate various kinds of deictic parameters and attentional shifts across a text. Its emphasis on context offers an insightful way for thinking both about how reading involves the interplay of text and a range of background knowledge, and how knowledge itself is generated through a literary encounter. TWT thus offers one of the best models in cognitive stylistics for accounting for readerly interpretations in a systematic way.

There is now plenty of research on TWT and its popularity can be seen in the range of discourse types (poetry, novels, drama, TV and film, multimedia texts as well as many non-literary texts) that cognitive stylisticians have used to exemplify the theory. As a starting point, an excellent overview of TWT principles and of different methodologies and methods can be found in Gavins and Lahey (2016).

4.2.6 Mind-modelling

Mind-modelling (Stockwell 2009; 2020) is another reader-oriented concept that provides a framework for describing how readers build a rich sense of a character's mind and position themselves in relation to that mind when engaging with literary texts. Mind-modelling is an extension of Theory of Mind (Premack and Woodruff 1978), a concept from cognitive psychology which posits that we recognise others have minds like our own, and of the notion of mind style (Fowler 1977) from stylistics which argues that the specific words a character uses positions readers to theorise about that character's particular 'cognitive state' (Boase-Beier 2003: 254). Mind-modelling, like Text World Theory, provides a contextualised framework that recognises that readers bring to any literary experience various kinds of schematic knowledge that they use as a basis for understanding characters, including knowledge of themselves, and this knowledge interacts with textual patterns in the shaping of a fictional consciousness. Stockwell (2020: 179) outlines five 'stylistic patterns' that generally encourage 'rich mind-modelling':

1 direct descriptions of physical appearance and manner, gestures and body language, explicit narratorial direction;
2 the presentation of speech for an apparently autonomous sense of characters' personality, mood, and perspective;
3 the representation of thought, beliefs, and intentions as if you as a reader have telepathic ability;
4 the reactions of other characters (including the narrator), who can serve as counterparts for your own reading response;
5 social relationships defined by deictic markers and social register, defining and sustaining all the divergences of characters' viewpoints from your own.

You can, of course, test these patterns out by looking at texts to see whether they support the generation of a rich mind-model and/or examine readers' responses to texts that have varying degrees of these patterns. For practical examples on mind-modelling within stylistics, you could look at Stockwell and Mahlberg (2015) on Dickens's *David Copperfield*, and Harrison and Giovanelli (2022) on Elizabeth Strout's *Olive Kitteridge* (outlined in Chapter 2).

4.3 Preliminary considerations

When you are undertaking research in cognitive stylistics, many if not all of the considerations that we outlined in Chapter 3 will stand. You will want to consider, however, two specific questions. First, you will need to think about the particular area of cognitive stylistics that you are interested in. You'll see from the case studies we present below that the area may relate to the particular interest or expertise of the researcher, but equally it can arise from text under consideration for analysis. Your choice thus will need to align with your overall strategy for designing your research questions and protocol that we discussed in Chapter 2. Another consideration will be your data. As we outlined in Chapter 1, many studies in stylistics now have a dual intensive commitment in that they analyse both the language of the text and the interpretative effects on readers through generating response data.

4.4 Selected case studies

We now turn to providing summaries of four published projects in cognitive stylistics that we think are useful in terms of highlighting the different kinds of work that is possible in this area. All of them are focused on linguistic style, and all draw on cognitive stylistic methods, but whereas the first three are largely concerned with how readers relate to specific textual effects, the final one (McLoughlin) also suggests and exemplifies the usefulness of cognitive stylistics to the creative writer. As you read these case studies, we would encourage you to encouraged to consider how you might set up similar projects to analyse or text ideas that you might have about the production and interpretation of texts.

4.4.1 Metaphor and time in Lisa Gorton's The Life of Houses

Isabelle Wentworth's (2021) study of time and place in Lisa Gorton's novel *The Life of Houses* (Gorton 2015) examines the relationship between the main protagonist, Kim, and Sea House, a house that belongs to her grandparents and that she visits one summer holiday. Wentworth specifically examines the influence of the house in terms of the representation and perception of time, highlighting the interaction between Kit and the house, which is anthropomorphised throughout the novel, both by the third person external narrator and in Kit's own focalised narration. Kit's relationship with the house is such that she views it more as a social

actor than an inanimate building and Wentworth, drawing on research in cognitive psychology, argues that Gorton's novel thus exemplifies the ways that everyday scenes, objects, and emotions may impact on our sense of time.

Wentworth's article is useful becomes it also systemically outlines its own influences from the field of cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics. First, Wentworth introduces research from cognitive psychology which demonstrates how 'humans respond to both their social *and* material environments by mapping perceived movement and posture onto their own bodies' (2021: 110) before itemising some ways that part of Kit's identity emerges from her interaction with Sea House. She then discusses her analytical methods from cognitive linguistics and stylistics, highlighting work from Langacker's Cognitive Grammar and various stylistics treatments of mind style before concentrating on the conceptual metaphors HOUSES ARE PEOPLE and TIME IS SPACE and a further set of metaphorical construals of TIME to examine the influence of Sea House on Kit's mind.

Wentworth takes a systematic approach to analysing the metaphors in the novel. First, she begins with the metaphor HOUSES ARE PEOPLE, demonstrating how cross-domain mappings frequently underpin how Kit represents Sea House. For example, she highlights how Sea House is often presented with characteristics similar to a human body: 'chairs with legs like solid calves' (47); [ornaments with] 'dried out residue of veins' (46); and through verb processes that highlight growth or movement akin to a more human experiencer or agent: 'the house grown vast' (19); 'the house beside them settling back into its own shape in the dark' (19) 'it loomed, as if on a hill' (130). In turn, the metaphor operates in a bidirectional way in that Kit reverses source and target domains to conceive her grandparents and relatives as 'house-like'. One relative, for example, codified in a portrait on the wall is described as 'upholstered: the body like furniture, solid as the hair she sat so straight-backed on' (42), while her grandparents seem to blend into the fabric of the house itself, their physical descriptions merging with the various colours Kit uses to describe the interior furnishings of Sea House.

Sea House appears to have remained steadfast through time and Wentworth examines this representation through the second metaphor TIME IS SPACE, that articulates the temporal dimension by emphasising the vastness of the spatial landscape in which the house sits. Wentworth pinpoints these realisations in modifiers such as 'endless' and 'infinite' and phrasal verbs such as 'extending out' (27) that denote the vastness of the house. These in turn have a noticeable impact on Kit in terms of slowing down her perception of time, a point Wentworth explains by drawing on cognitive psychology research (Nather and Bueno 2011; Nather et al. 2011) that highlights how participants in experiments who were asked to look at series of images of people in various postures experienced a slowing down of their perception of time when the postures were static.

This metaphor also operates at a thematic level to index Kit's own physical and mental position in relation to time and her emotional state as the house takes its hold on her. Sea House is largely represented as the instrumental factor in a series

of family tragedies and painful episodes, the emotional toil of which manifests itself in Kit herself feeling that time itself has slowed down, a representation that aligns with how generally a low mood results in a perceived sense of time's normal speed being disrupted (Droit-Volet et al. 2011).

Wentworth equally draws on Moore's (2011) notion of DURATION IS DISTANCE to outline how Gorton reverses the usual perception of future time as a moving entity towards the present temporal frame of its conceptualiser, instead framing the future as moving away from Kit who, remaining a trapped and static observer like Sea House, is haunted instead by the sense of the past being closer to her. As Wentworth points out, Kit's perception of time is less underpinned by the conventional primary metaphor HERE IS NOW (Grady 1997) and more by a reconfigured mapping of HERE IS THEN.

Wentworth's careful analysis articulates the shifting nature of Kit's character over the course of her stay at Sea House. Wentworth highlights how at the end of her stay, Kit realises that she needs to own and control her own identity and destiny rather than have it controlled for her like her ancestors. This results in a different set of construals, a different set of configurations along spatial and temporal dimensions, and a different iteration of the TIME IS SPACE metaphor as

> We see that now, at the end of her stay at the Sea House, the direction of Kit's gaze—straight ahead—is in significant defiance of the house's focus on the past, on behind, reversing the image schema that dominates the earlier narrative: from backward, to forward. This change becomes clearer after Kit leaves the house, as she actively shakes off the property's temporal aporia, defining herself in opposition to the house and its suspended place in history.
>
> *(Wentworth 2021: 121)*

Overall, Wentworth's study exemplifies how to draw on ideas and studies from both cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics and build these into a close reading of a singular theme in a literary text. You could replicate a study like this by thinking about a text that seems to have one dominant theme and consider how research from cognitive psychology might inform an understanding of fictional scenes and characters. As long as your analysis was also grounded in the language of the text, as Wentworth's is, then this would be a very good example of a research project in cognitive stylistics.

4.4.2 A text-world analysis of Michael McCarthy's poem 'Saxton churchyard'

Joanna Gavins' (2015) analysis of Michael McCarthy's poem 'Saxton churchyard' (McCarthy 2009) is a different kind of exercise in cognitive stylistics. In her analysis, Gavins draws on her own extensive research on Text World Theory to highlight how contemporary cognitive stylistics can bring together text and context in

a systematic and rigorous way. Gavins maintains a focus on both the language of the poem, viewed through the text-world framework and the various kinds of background knowledge that she draws on as a reader to generate meaning from the poem.

Gavins first points out that she and McCarthy as discourse participants are separated in time or space, which as we outlined earlier in this chapter is viewed as a split discourse world. Gavins, however, explains that the reader in a split discourse world may often know details about their fellow participant: for example, we often know aspects of an author's biography, may have learnt through interviews and secondary reading their motivation for writing and so on. In this instance, Gavins outlines some of the biographical information on McCarthy available to her which compensates, to some extent, for the split discourse world and, as she argues, informs her response to the text.

Gavins then outlines how the language of the text positions her to create particular mental representations of the scene being described. As we indicated earlier, in Text World Theory terms these are known as text-worlds. Gavins initially focuses on the title and an epigraph, 'To Edward, and in memory of Amy', which follows it, explaining carefully how the opening text-world of the poem is centred on the churchyard, suggesting that the richness of this text-word is informed by the schema which the noun phrase 'Saxton churchyard' activates. Gavins highlights how readers are likely to arrive at both relatively similar text-worlds (she argues that most English readers would imagine the title as referring to a fairly old, quintessential churchyard) and slightly different ones (she draws on her own knowledge of Saxton, which was close to where she grew up, and which she visited as a child). She then outlines how the dedication in the epigraph leads her to believe that 'Edward' and 'Amy' will be the focuses of the poem; we later learn that they are two children, one dead whose burial is taking place in Saxton churchyard, and the other seriously ill in a hospital in Leeds.

As Gavins analyses the poem, she carefully explains how her own discourse-word knowledge contributes to the construction of its text-worlds. She exemplifies the principle of 'text-drivenness' by outlining how the poem's words trigger the relevant knowledge needed to engage with the poem. A good example of this is in her explanation of how she draws on the proper nouns 'Lord Dacre' and 'Towton', the first a historical figure from the 15th century noted for his bravery, who was killed in battle and subsequently buried in Saxton churchyard, and the second the name of a place a few miles from Saxton where the battle took place, providing a detailed account of the background knowledge about each that she draws on as she reflects on her engagement with the poem. As her analysis continues, Gavins maintains a strong focus both on the language of the text and the various kinds of knowledge and memories that the poem invites the reader to draw on. She demonstrates how the poem moves between contrasting but complementary pairs: the dead (Amy) and the ill (Edward) children, the historical figure of Lord Dacre and the similarities between his bravery and that of the children in the poem, the shifts in time and space as the poem moves from past to present and from Saxton churchyard to the

hospital, and finally the connectedness of lives that is made explicit in the poem's final image as a thrush sings in 'the ancient yew tree'.

Gavins' analysis reveals the various layers of the poem and how these contribute to its emotional pull that as the reader is pulled across a number of world-switches that make connections between the past the present, what Gavins terms the ''cracked and fractured'' (454) nature of the poem. As Gavins argues, this a poem that seems to blend various time frames and spaces together so that the reader is left 'juggling multiple text-worlds concurrently'. Overall, Gavins provides an incredibly rich reading that demonstrates the full power of Text World Theory as an analytical tool for the modern stylistician, exemplifying what elsewhere Stockwell (2009) has termed the 'texture' of literary reading.

Gavins' chapter is an excellent exemplification of how to apply Text World Theory to a literary text and could be replicated with any text especially one that might seem to rely on a similar interplay of textual and extra-textual knowledge. Gavins is also careful to acknowledge that the reading that she provides is a personal one and that the point of a stylistic analysis is not to provide an exhaustive meaning, but rather one that is clearly outlined and precise in its application of its chosen theory:

> As I have already emphasized earlier in this discussion, I am not for a moment suggesting that my reading of Saxton Churchyard is 'correct' or 'preferred' in any way. The inferences I have described myself drawing, my mapping of real-world counterparts onto text-world components, may, for all I know, be highly eccentric when examined within the broader cultural parameters from which they were generated. What I have attempted to demonstrate, however, is that my reading of the poem is essentially grounded in my own previous experiences and knowledge and inextricably linked to the discourse-world in which my first encounter with the text took place.
>
> *(Gavins 2015: 455)*

This is an important point for the stylisticians and one to remember and reflect on as you plan for your project, regardless of the methods that you choose to use. The objectivity in stylistic scholarship arrives from applying rigorous methods in a retrievable and replicable manner but also extends to being clear and honest about the very nature of what literary meaning is. The strength of the method is in its transparency and in its invitation to other readers to reflect on that method and/or to use the same tools.

4.4.3 Readers' responses to -ing forms in 'Belgium'

While Gavins' analysis of 'Saxton churchyard' provides a detailed explanation of her personal response to the poem, Marcello Giovanelli's (2022b) study of grammatical form in Mary Borden's short story 'Belgium' is a project grounded in the responses of others. It is an example, therefore, of what is now an established tradition of reader-response studies in contemporary stylistics. Giovanelli's article examines reader responses to Borden's story, written during the First World War, in

the context of examining a specific linguistic feature, here the interpretative effects of the *-ing* participle as conceived in Langacker's Cognitive Grammar.

Giovanelli begins with an overview of 'Belgium' and *The Forbidden Zone* (Borden 1929), the collection from which the story is taken. He draws on a small corpus of online reader reviews to highlight how readers talk about the collection in terms of embodied senses and experiences as well as providing an overview of some similar literary-critical responses to First World War literature more generally. Through his introductory remarks, Giovanelli outlines two related gaps in the existing literature: the first is the near-absence of empirical studies of First World War texts; and the second, is the lack of testing of aspects of Langacker's theory within modern stylistic scholarship. To address these gaps, Giovanelli designs an experimental study involving a text manipulation exercise where two groups of readers are asked read different versions of Borden's story. The first group read the original version of 'Belgium' ('Belgium A'), containing twenty-five instances of *-ing* across its ten paragraphs, and the second group read an altered version of 'Belgium' ('Belgium B') in which all of the *-ing* forms had been replaced with finite verbs. Giovanelli's aim is to test CG's claim that *-ing* forms mark a particular construal of scene in which the conceptualisers have an 'internal perspective' (Langacker 2008: 120) or have a sense of being 'very close by' (Verspoor 1996: 438).

Giovanelli draws on a protocol partly influenced by other study (Bell et al. 2019) in which the researchers discuss the difficulty of eliciting responses about a specific textual feature. To mitigate this problem, they use a two-stage process in which they first ask participants to comment on their response to a specific language feature (in this case the use of the second person pronoun 'you') along a Likert scale, before giving them a follow-up question that asks them to explain their answer in a longer format which could then be analysed qualitatively. Each participant (n=16) in Giovanelli's study answered three questions to each of the ten paragraphs of the story in turn, providing a total of thirty responses per participant.

The first question was

> 1. Focusing on the verbs only, how close do you feel to the characters, situations and events described in this paragraph?
>
> *Not at all–Very little–A little–Quite a lot–A great deal*

In order to lessen the inevitable subjectivity that arises when participants are asked to interpret words as part of a research design, Giovanelli also provided the following definition of 'close':

> The first question relates to the use of verbs in the paragraph and how close these make you feel to the characters, situations and events described in the story. 'Close' refers to the extent to which the situation and events are presented in a way that makes you feel physically near to them. Think about the form of the verbs in the paragraph as well as their meanings. Choose the answer that best fits the paragraph as a whole.

The second question, eliciting more verbal data that could be analysed qualitatively, was as follows

> 2. Please explain your answer to Question 1 by giving and commenting on specific examples that make you feel this way.

Giovanelli's final question recognised that there were other linguistic features in the story that participants might consider interesting and significant in shaping their interpretation of the story. He notes, for example, that the use of the second person pronoun 'you' and various kinds of spatial, temporal and social deixis might also facilitate an 'embodied perspective'. His final question was therefore

> 3. Are there any other examples of language in the paragraph that you feel make you feel close to the characters, situations and events? Please give specific examples and comment on how they make you feel as a reader.

Having conducted the study, Giovanelli found the following results. First, that readers of 'Belgium A', reported a stronger sense of closeness to the events of the story when reading paragraphs that had a larger number of *-ing* forms. In turn, fewer readers of 'Belgium B' generally reported a sense of closeness to the events in the story. Giovanelli then turns to two paragraphs in 'Belgium A' that had the highest concentration of *-ing* forms. He notes that while according to CG, these paragraphs ought to the two where readers report higher degrees of closeness, the reality was somewhat different with readers of 'Belgium A' reporting higher degrees of closeness to one of the paragraphs, and readers of 'Belgium B' reporting higher degrees of closeness to the other. In order to investigate this result further, Giovanelli undertakes his own cognitive stylistic analysis of each of the paragraphs, highlighting the salience of both *-ing* forms and other linguistic features. He then aligns these with the coded reader response data generated from Questions 2 and 3 to examine the participant responses in more detail and to finalise his discussion.

Giovanelli's study highlights the need to test the claims of theoretical grammars in practice by drawing on real rather than imagined readers. His study also suggests that some language features may not be explicitly noticed by readers and that readers often use other strategies for articulating interpretations sometimes preferring, despite instructions, to comment in more general terms. For example, it is also clear that other linguistic phenomena impacted on readers and that their responses to the later paragraphs suggested that there was a cumulative effect as participants drew on their responses to preceding paragraphs, using them as a benchmark against which to judge their current interpretations. Finally, the narrative style of the story in which the narrator speaks directly to readers at

the end, may have also impacted on the degree to which participants align themselves with the world of the text.

Overall Giovanelli's study perhaps raises more questions than it answers but exemplifies a neat way of testing a specific aspect of linguistic theory in relation to literary reading. Unlike the other case studies in this chapter, it is driven by the responses of readers other than the analyst but maintains a focus on language and thus offers a neat example of the dual intensive commitment we referred to in Chapter 1. It is also noticeable that Giovanelli draws on a research design already tested by another set of researchers, extending this to examine a different kind of linguistic variable and literary genre. When thinking about your own projects, you might like to use a similar approach in terms of replicating a protocol used in another study. Finally, Giovanelli's article is a timely reminder that theoretical ideas need to be tested and that sometimes results are relatively surprising. After all, readers do not always behave in ways that theories suggest that they should!

4.4.4 Cognitive stylistics and creative writing

Nigel McLoughlin's (2020) chapter on cognitive stylistics and creative writing is not so much a project as such but more an argument for how cognitive stylistic methods could be used to reflect on creative practice. McLoughlin, himself also a poet, builds on his own work connecting creative writing and stylistics and those others (e.g. Scott 2023), framed within Oatley's (2003: 161) concept of 'readingandwriting', which conceptualises the two practices as inherently interconnected. In this sense, concepts and methods traditionally applied to the study of reading should also be useful for the study of writing.

McLoughlin's chapter therefore view cognitive stylistics through the lens of a practising writer, arguing that its principles can provide support in developing written work. McLoughlin specifically argues that it is in the revising process where the writer needs to reflect more carefully on specific language choices in their draft that stylistics becomes useful since here there is already a text where existing choices can be analysed, and the interpretative effects of alternative choices played out and comparatively analysed.

McLoughlin develops his ideas with reference to specific concepts from cognitive stylistics and lines from drafts of his own poems to exemplify both his thinking process and the effect of any reworking. For example, he demonstrates how drawing on the notion of figure-ground (see Section 3.2.1) can help the poet to rethink an image so that it becomes sharper and more compelling. He highlights how an image of birds flying through the air in one of his poems (McLoughlin 2009) was reconfigured so that the relationship between the original figure and ground was reversed so that the final image became 'feel the sky rush through the flight of birds'. McLoughlin argue for the usefulness of writers exploring these kinds of

figure-ground configurations more generally. For example, as well as focusing on the beginnings and endings of poems, parts of a poem that tend to get attention in creative writing classes, McLoughlin (2020: 86) suggest that other areas of a poems could benefit from rethinking

> However, I would add the need to be aware of the slack areas in the poem, where language often flags. Sometimes poems are like a washing line anchored strongly at both ends, but where the middle sags. It is important to keep the energy level of the language up, and maintain a series of surprising images across the poem. Using figure-ground or trajector landmark reversals is one way of creating strength and surprise in imagery, across the poem as a whole, and awareness of this can help the revision process by providing a starting strategy, because figure-ground relationships are among the most basic elements that occur in all texts.

McLoughlin also highlights the usefulness of schema theory, which we discussed in Section 3.1.1, to help beginning writers avoid 'telling' rather than 'showing'. McLoughlin demonstrates how thinking carefully about how to evoke a schema, without being too explicit can be a very useful exercise; the example he gives is 'I cupped the glass away from an elbow', which suggest the writer is in a busy place without explicitly mentioning it. And a writer may introduce a schema and then disrupt it immediately so as to produce a startling and disjointed effect. Equally useful are metaphor and Text World Theory, both also discussed in Section 3.2. Metaphor is often thought as ubiquitous in poetry, but McLoughlin argues that writers can benefit a great deal from reflecting on how to create novel metaphors through particular cross-domain mappings and blends. In his discussion of Text World Theory, McLoughlin outlines how a writer might consider the relationships between different text-worlds in a poem, choosing to make one more or less prominent in terms of its world-builders and function-advancers, or accentuating its texture by introducing various types of world-switches, modal worlds, or hypotheticals which project particular points of view.

The strength of McLoughlin's chapter is that he provides numerous examples from his own and his students' writing so that the effects of his argument and his revisions are clear and helpful. Although a very different type of application of cognitive stylistics to the other three case studies in this section, you might find this chapter, and McLoughlin's other work, useful and interesting if you were thinking of undertaking research where participants engage in re-writing or intervention activities (Pope 1995), where they might look at specific genres that are inherently reconfigurations of another text such as ekphrasis (Gavin 2024), where cognitive stylistic tools might be used to support writing in educational contexts (Giovanelli 2014; Healey and Gardner 2021), or where your project involves autoethnography as a research method in creative writing (Giovanelli and Pager-McClymont, in press).

4.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter began by outlining the influence of cognitive psychology and cognitive linguistics on cognitive stylistics before presenting with you with some key concepts, methods, and frameworks. We hope that these will help you to plan for and undertake your own project; you can call yourself a cognitive stylistician!

At the same time, we have emphasised that cognitive stylistics, like any form of stylistic scholarship, maintains the same principles that typify the discipline more broadly. We hope that the case studies presented in this chapter exemplify in practice this important point. It is also worth mentioning that, like any type of stylistics, cognitive stylistics is less a discrete area and more an approach that could be integrated with any other kind of stylistic work, including those areas explicitly discussed in this handbook. So, it's very possible to integrate cognitive stylistics with corpus stylistics, or with media stylistics, or use cognitive stylistic tools to explore an area such as education. Indeed there is already much exciting work that has been undertaken in this area, and we would encourage you to explore the research literature to find examples that might be useful and/or inspire your own work.

4.6 Further reading

The best book on cognitive poetics/stylistics is Stockwell (2020) which covers all of the ideas in this chapter in greater detail and provides a range of activities and further reading suggestions. Gibbons and Whiteley (2018) is a textbook that provides another excellent overview of the field. For specific topics, Gavins (2007) offers an introduction to Text World Theory, and the chapters in Gavins and Lahey (2016) outline a range of areas to which TWT has been applied. Giovanelli and Harrison (2024) and Giovanelli et al. (2021) offer user-friendly introductions to and applications of Cognitive Grammar. There are several excellent studies and handbooks on cognitive metaphor: Kövecses (2020) is a good place to start to get a sense of the field and recent developments and innovations.

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5

MEDIA STYLISTICS

In this chapter, we will consider

- **how to understand how different technological affordances mediate texts and experiences of texts;**
- **how technology shapes and is shaped by the texts people produce using different tools;**
- **how methods from stylistics can help us understand the different elements of texts, text-production, and text consumption in technologically mediated spaces.**

5.1 Introduction

Media analysis from a stylistics perspective focuses on how different mediums of transmission of meaning can affect the way that language is used within those mediums. This can be because of the technical specifications of the media texts that you are investigating, for example, if a text is written or spoken, or because of expectations about the medium and genres of text on that medium that persist as a result of how a particular medium has been used historically. This chapter will present a brief historical context for media analysis, before highlighting the importance of different technological affordances in the analysis of media texts, among other factors. Following the case studies, we will end with some reflections on the current technological developments in the production of media texts, particularly the growth of artificial intelligence and large language models.

Whilst 'media' or 'the media' is often understood as the channels, means, and producers of content for mass audiences, 'media' in a contemporary context can be quite difficult to pin down. Due to various distinctions between broad and

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narrowcasting and 'mass consumption', an everyday understanding of the term can be misleading for those entering the field. For the purposes of this chapter, 'media' in its most basic form refers to any kind of communication that is mediated, usually by some technological means, in contrast to face-to-face, synchronous spoken or signed interaction. Any change in this basic form of interaction between people requires some technology. For stylistic analysis, understanding the role of the technology and the form of mediation is essential to understanding why people communicate in the way that they are and how certain choices are made.

From the growth of interaction using computer and Internet technology, there has been a tendency to differentiate between 'old' and 'new' media. This split might best be understood as a distinction between analogue and digital technologies, where analogue technologies involve the sending of physical signals (either as physical objects or electromagnetic waves), and digital technologies involve expressing information using binary code. Old media, including radio, television, and print media, developed over many hundreds of years, together with the development of language. Even earlier, the invention of the printing press and the mass production of written texts could be seen as the starting point of mass communication as well, with the ability for written texts to be produced at scale and at a far more inexpensive rate than previously available. The discovery and use of electricity for communication by radio frequency further impacted the speed with which information could be spread.

New Media, by contrast, has emerged over a much shorter period, over the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries, as computer technology rapidly developed. With computer technology, information and content can be produced in identical ways in different spaces, because the information is sent in binary code that is easily copied and transmitted across time and distance with no effect on the fidelity of the binary information. Whilst analogue objects are subject to changes in physical environments, digital information can be rendered the same over time and space. This allows for much quicker production and transmission. The development of digital technology has created a recursive relationship with the development of language and communication practices using this technology, because the technological affordances produce certain communication practices, and the communication practices in turn influence the kinds of technologies that are produced.

In the contemporary world, however, distinguishing between analogue and digital media has become increasingly difficult and traditionally analogue, 'old' media, including radio, television, and newspapers, is now largely consumed in digital contexts. At the same time, these older media forms hold with them the history of their development and expectations of users about how these kinds of media should be consumed. The same can also be said of newer forms of media and their use over time, as, for example, users might have expectations about how Facebook or Instagram or TikTok should be used based on their popular historical use.

Contemporary media stylistics has looked at a range of different text types in recent years, including news media (Jeffries and Walker 2017), advertising (Cook 2008), TV (Castro 2024), radio (Mildorf 2017), blogs (Ringrow 2020), and online forums (Mackenzie 2017), among many, many others (see Ringrow and Pihlaja 2020 for an overview). In all these studies, the type and position of stylistic variation shows the importance of mode, medium and choice in the production of texts, with consequences for how those texts are understood by different readers and viewers in different contexts. Each study also shows how stylistics offers a very rich set of opportunities for researchers to better understand the interaction among authors, readers/viewers, and platform on which they are engaged. Where to start with the analysis is often a key challenge.

Because of this complexity, there are a myriad of analytic approaches to media in stylistics. Choosing which method to use often starts with a decision on what elements of the media text might be analysed and how it might be consumed or produced. From there, the analyst considers the possible theoretical and methodological tools available to them, and this includes taking on board different approaches to discourse more generally. For example, principles of Conversation Analysis can be applied to interaction between individuals using SMS (Tagg 2012) or messaging apps (Paulus et al. 2016). Media texts have also been the main source of data for different forms of linguistics analysis including corpus linguistics, which has regularly included analysis of newspaper texts (O'Halloran 2010). Analysis of keywords, or words that appear more regularly in one kind of text compared to another, can give insight into issues like Islamophobia in press coverage (Clarke et al. 2022) or representations of disabled persons (Potts et al. 2023). This kind of analysis, as discussed further in Chapter 6, can give overviews of very large datasets and also suggest areas for further investigation using corpus-led or corpus-assisted discourse analysis (Jones and Collins 2020). Sociolinguists like Grieve and colleagues have used new media texts, particularly Twitter (now X) data to map linguistic change over time. Ilbury's (2020) work similarly has looked at how African American Vernacular English has become a stylistic feature of a 'Sassy Queen' persona used by certain gay British men on the platform, showing how different kinds of identities can be performed using resources specific to online contexts (see case studies below).

Multimodal analysis has also been important for the development of media analysis, particularly in technologically mediated contexts. Pioneered by the work of Kress and van Leeuwan (2001; 2006) and developed significantly by Jewitt (2009), multimodal discourse analysis works to understand the relationship between text and other modes of discourse at work in media. This can include newspapers (Caple et al. 2020), advertising (Herman et al. 2022; Ringrow 2016), films (Gordejuela, 2019), graphic novels (Abbott and Forceville 2011), and picture books (Sunderland and McGlashan 2012), with interest particularly in how these different elements can work together. These analyses are often very interested in the effect that stylistic choices have on the reader or viewer, and can include

analysis of reader responses on social media (Nuttall and Harrison 2020), where there is often overlap between producers and consumers of content and users take on both roles consistently.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1995; 2001) has taken a particular interest in media texts, given their importance in spreading and maintaining ideological positions. This work is particularly concerned with how power is represented and maintained in discourse, including and especially in mass media, where the presentation of actions and actors plays an important role in how common sense and ideology emerge over time. Ras' (2020) work, for example, has looked at how victims of human trafficking and modern slavery have been portrayed in the press, while Tranchese (2020) has looked at how rape victims are represented in newspaper reporting and the importance of stylistic choices in establishing blame and responsibility. CDA provides additional tools to understand how stylistic choices play an important role in the development of ideology in media discourses. Many of the articles cited throughout this chapter include elements of CDA in the analysis and are concerned with relationships of power.

5.2 Preliminary considerations

With a background in the different kinds of research that has been done in media stylistics over the recent past, in this section, we will look at important concepts in the analysis of media discourse. Regardless of the form of media you choose, these different elements should be considered before undertaking your research because they play a key role in how media texts come into existence. These elements include Affordances, Mode and Medium, Production and Consumption, and Distribution.

5.2.1 Affordances

Affordance is a key term in media stylistics. The term was first used in the seventies by Gibson (1977), who describes it as an action possibility formed by the relationship between an agent and its environment: what you are able to do in a particular action environment. For the analysis of media texts, considering 'affordances' allows us to think about what is possible in a particular media context and then work to understand how a text producer is acting within those unique confines and what the media environment is both allowing them to do and limiting them from doing. For example, in analysing a particular mobile app, you will want to think about both what the user is able to do using the app and what they are encouraged to do and not do.

Affordances in media, both analogue and digital, have been historically limited by technological and economic factors. These factors also play an important role how different in media environments develop and how different technological developments affect societal transformations in different ways. For example, SMS

messages previously were limited in length due to the available technology in the late 90s and early 00s. That technological limitation, as well as the practice of charging users for each individual SMS message they sent, resulted in a way of writing text messages that promoted brevity and conciseness and led to typographical developments like emojis to communicate more complex ideas with fewer characters and less input effort. Now, the technology exists in messaging apps to input text more quickly, and for acronyms like 'lol' to be corrected as 'laugh out loud'. However, despite the change in technology, the practices that were established in the first instance of the use of the platform and technology persist; even though 'lol' can easily become 'laugh out loud' with little effort or cost, users persist in using the acronym. Across different platforms, apps, and devices, similar features of text production and interaction persist even after technological limitations have been effectively removed, either through an arbitrary limitation imposed by the app or service (for example, X still imposing a 280-character limit) or from the conventions of the app or service's use (for example, in the persistence of short videos on TikTok despite being able to post videos up to 10 minutes long in 2024).

5.2.2 Medium and mode

In Media Studies, *Medium* refers to how a message is transmitted and the choice of medium often has an effect on how a particular message is received (see McLuhan 1964). Written text, for example, has many different mediums of transmissions — it can be produced in a book like this, or it could be presented in posts on Bluesky or X or Threads (micro-blogging sites) or it could be presented in an image on an Instagram post, like a celebrity notes app apology.

Mode refers to how a message is conveyed, for example whether it is written or spoken (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001). The mode of communication in this chapter is written language, but it could also be read aloud as an audiobook. Parts of the chapter could be made into short Instagram videos either with text on the screen or with different images. The text could be signed through a sign language. In each case, how the message is transmitted to the consumer will be affected by the mode that is chosen.

Multimodal, the term that was introduced earlier in the chapter, refers to texts that feature different modes of communication interacting with one another to present the same message (Kress and Van Leeuwen 2001). A TikTok video that includes video, spoken language, and written text interposed on the video is an example of multimodal communication, because the different modes work together to create a particular message for the consumer, one that would be different if any individual mode was removed.

Medium and mode are closely related to the technological affordances that are being used to transmit the message, often again connected to the affordances and historical ways that different technologies and platforms have developed over time. All the major microblogging sites that have developed since 2022, after Twitter

was acquired by Elon Musk, allow for users to post images and videos, and while users do use this feature regularly, written text is still presented as the primary mode of communication (evidenced in the apps prompting you to first enter written text, rather than an image or a video). This can be contrasted with Instagram, where posts (photos or videos) may merely include accompanying written texts optionally. In both cases, the history of the platforms' use influences how a user interacts with the affordances. Instagram has historically been used to post images and then videos, whereas Twitter was historically a place for users to microblog in written text form.

5.2.3 Production and consumption

Production refers to how the texts are created and by whom (see Herman 2013). Texts can be produced by individuals, such as when a teenager posts a picture of himself and his friends walking home after school. Alternatively, texts can be produced by a group or an institution, as in the posts of a corporation on TikTok. Texts on different sites can also be automatically generated, for example a bot that automatically tracks Taylor Swift's private jet's movements and posts them online. Producers might not always be clear, first because the production of a text is not always clearly attributable to an individual or group. In these examples, whilst the teenager posted the photo with his friends, arguably the group is producing the text together. With the corporation posts, an individual worker is, at any given time, posting on behalf of the institution, even if the individual is acting in their capacity as an agent of the corporation.

Consumption refers to the reading, viewing, and/or hearing of the message. The people who see an Instagram post are the consumers of that text. But like production, consumption is not necessarily a straightforward thing and could mean different things for different platforms or for different messages. You are likely to engage with the process of reading an email in a way that is different to reading the text of a TikTok video. Producers may also have particular consumers in mind when producing content, what Goffman long ago called an 'imagined audience' (Goffman 1959), which recursively relates to an actual audience as the user makes content for a particular type of user and then users interact with that content.

One key difference between old forms of media, which emerged prior to the Internet, and all the forms of media which have developed after Web 2.0 is the extent to which users of sites occupy both the position of producer and consumer at different times. This is most evident in social media sites where users regularly post and consume content for their networks, but it also occurs in the online instantiations of 'old' media sites like newspapers where users are encouraged to either comment on an article or share the article with their own networks with their own opinion or comment attached to the shared post. Increasingly, text production and consumption are automated by Artificial Intelligence which can create, post, and interact with others without any human input. There is also a hierarchy of production and

consumption on different platforms where one form of production is the primary form and other forms are secondary, for example on a Reddit post, where the main post is the primary text, and the comments and discussion are secondary. This is evident in the interaction between the presentation of the text on a page, where you see the newspaper article or the Reddit post prior to seeing the comments on them.

5.2.4 Distribution

Finally, *distribution* refers to how the messages reach individual users and what mechanisms are at work in that distribution (see Ulin 2019). In many early iterations of social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, users chose to follow other users and when a user logged into the site, they would see a reverse chronological feed of the most recent posts by everyone they followed. As these sites have developed, more work has been done to increase engagement, leading to the platforms exerting more control on what a user sees when they open an app. While users are still able to follow others, in many cases the feed they are presented includes content that platforms think will be the most likely to garner your engagement. Reverse chronological posting of followers in theory is also a finite resource, one that you can complete while using an app — you could see all the posts of the people you are following in one day. Feeds, which are gathered content from algorithms taking into account a range of information about you and your behaviour (and behaviours of people like you) can never be exhausted and you can be fed new content until you close the app. The best example of this can be seen in the For You page of TikTok which will continue to feed you interesting, relevant content (including some content from the accounts you've chosen to follow), with no duplication, for as many hours as you can stand to watch TikTok videos.

Distribution plays an important role in analysis of media texts because although we believe that once we post something online, it is available for anyone in the world to see, in practice, this is not the case and many different factors might affect how the message is distributed, including

1 the platform you're using,
2 if you're a paying user,
3 if you have been successful in engaging users in the past,
4 if your content is controversial in some way,
5 if your content is banned or blocked in different contexts, or
6 if the platform you're posting is promoting or demoting a certain kind of content.

All these factors will affect who is consuming a particular message and has serious consequences for the sorts of texts and messages that become viral or are shared widely and those which aren't.

Finally, before undertaking stylistic analysis of media texts, the historical context in which the text has been produced and consumed should be considered. The

analyst's choices must be attuned to how the users of platforms or devices came to use them in the first place because the media production tools that have come before and the others available to them at any given time dictate how they choose to create specific texts in specific places. Gathering this background knowledge takes time spent on the platform and you should consider spending time on a platform before attempting to analyse text from it, considering the potential of ethnographic tools (Androutsopoulos 2008) in understanding the platform you've chosen to analyse. This base level of understanding, ideally of the kinds of users you are analysing and the texts you are considering, while also considering the ethical implications for the analysis on which you're embarking.

These different elements all play a role in production and consumption of individual texts. Understanding each of these considerations lays the foundation for stylistic analysis, but they are not an end in-and-of themselves. That is to say, understanding any one of these elements is just a starting point to work on how language is used in any given context and what choices can be made and how those choices will affect the language that is being used on those platforms. Once these different considerations have been made, the analyst can then begin to consider what methods are the best for the platform and texts that you have chosen to analyse.

5.3 Selected case studies

The next section gives an overview of some practical examples that show the different ways that media stylistics can be employed on different kinds of media texts: online videos, blogs, and Tweets. Each of the case studies are different, but we will focus on the concepts raised in the previous section and consider how each of the studies engages with these concepts in their analysis of the data. In thinking about the different case studies, you're encouraged to think about the ways that users are positioning themselves using language in different ways and how changes in the contexts in which the texts are produced and consumed can change how people read, hear, and understand the same texts.

5.3.1 Positioning the producer and consumer in online videos

The first case study is taken from the book, *Religious Talk Online* (Pihlaja 2018). The book describes interactions between people of different faiths and how people discuss religious differences in online spaces, particularly when using videos to answer and respond to one another. The analysis is focused on how messages can change depending on who is viewing a video or how it is being presented to an audience. For example, in many of the videos analysed, a user has taken a video made by another user, downloaded it, and responded with their own video, similar to responses on TikTok where users will clip parts of others' videos. The process of responding to another's video often changes how the original message

is perceived, with implications for how messages spread online. To do this analysis, Pihlaja (2018) employs positioning analysis (Harré and van Lagenhove 1998), looking at how people position themselves and others to present their beliefs as right and other people's views as wrong, often using others' own words again them.

For this chapter, we'll look closely at one of these instances of response, which features an American Evangelical Christian who posted a video on YouTube entitled 'Dear Mr Atheist'. In the video, published in 2014, the YouTuber and influencer Joshua Feuerstein speaks directly to a person he identities as 'Mr atheist', although it's not clear to whom exactly he is referring, and takes issue with a cla. Feuerstein initially uploaded the video to his own social media platforms, and it was then clipped and uploaded again by another user called the Amazing Atheist. The following is an extract of the beginning of the video which appeared in both the original video and the clipped version of the Amazing Atheist's response:

> Hey guys, Josh Feuerstein here. You know the other day I had an atheist tell me that I was an idiot moronic and stupid for believing in God that He created this world because it took way too much faith to believe in a process like that while he believed in what he called the science of evolution. Well let's go ahead and let's do this: Dear mister atheist, first of all let me correct you because evolution is not a science. Never has and never will be. Why? Because it cannot fit within the parameters and parentheses of science for one simple reason: it was never observed.

Considering the different affordances that give rise to the video, the first is a very basic technological one: the ability of users to make quick, spontaneous videos with little additional cost or time commitment, other than the time taken to make the video. The mobile phone has become common in the contemporary world, but at the time of the video was made, mobile phone cameras and shooting a video quickly, on the go, and posting it online was still relatively novel and created a sense of urgency in response to others. The style of the language and presentation of himself in the video reflects this affordance and Feuerstein's choice to make the video in this manner rather than producing a longer, more carefully scripted and produced video. In turn, the ability to download others' content and reupload it with their own commentary on it allows the user, the Amazing Atheist, to reupload the video for his own purposes and position Feuerstein as he desires, an affordance not only of the technology, but also the practices on YouTube, where this way of responding to others was very common.

As a video on YouTube, the medium and mode of this text contributes to how the message is heard, not just about the rightness or wrongness of being a Christian or an atheist, but in the positioning of Feuerstein. Feuerstein speaks directly to the camera, positions himself as addressing who are very close to him, physically, to people who are literally 'in his face'. This heightens the emotional effect of the

response to being called 'an idiot, moronic and stupid' for his beliefs. Using an aggressive physical presence in the filming of the video, he can position himself as standing up to the atheist and defending other Christians. The positioning of himself and others here, using categories rather than specific people, allows for him to suggest that the interaction is indicative of a pattern of behaviour, where 'atheists' regularly attack not only him as an individual, but people 'who believe in God'. Using these positions, Feuerstein is then able to make a larger argument about Christianity and atheism in the world, and how Christians must respond when they are attacked, but as defenders of others, rather than instigators of the conflict, reinforced by the language of the response.

Feuerstein's video is also a good example of how producers' and consumers' content can shift when the affordances of a social media platform like YouTube are fully utilised. Although the video might be directed at atheists, Feuerstein's viewership at the time was largely comprised of Christians. Feuerstein's address of a generic atheist would have mostly been consumed by a Christian audience, who would not need to be convinced that Christianity is right, compared to atheism. The video then serves the purpose of reinforcing the previously held beliefs of Christians who agree with Feuerstein and are interested in seeing him effectively argue against people with whom they disagree. When the video is then reuploaded by the Amazing Atheist, a consumer of the video becomes a producer and in doing so, the Amazing Atheist changes the meaning of the message and the positionings, through commentary on the claims in the video and being able to cut and edit it to highlight different elements. Feuerstein is no longer positioned as a defender of the faith against atheists, but a foolish person making an outdated argument.

The distribution of the video to the Amazing Atheist's audience results in a change to how Feuerstein is positioned and a different narrative about Feuerstein, wherein Christians are presented as being ignorant and unable to understand basic arguments about evolution and the scientific process. Although both videos, Feuerstein's original video and the Amazing Atheist's response, would be available on YouTube, because of the different audiences to whom they are distributed, they are seen and experienced in very different ways, by very different audiences, with the distribution of the video changing the effective message of the same text. This process can continue indefinitely in online arguments, with individuals and category positions shifting in telling and retelling of the same stories about categories and the relative positionings of individuals in relation to one another.

What this example, and the rest of the study in the book, shows, is that the message a person intends to send using a particular format with a particular set of users in mind, can be changed once it is distributed in a different context to a different group of consumers. Analysts then need to consider not only the message that they think the producer has intended to send in any media text, but also the ways that message has been received or how it has been employed by other users to change the message, both in subtle and substantial ways. Where media texts have been

distributed to different audiences, it's not enough to simply look at the words that a person is saying, but how those words are understood by the audiences who might be viewing the message. The meaning of words is affected by the complex life of the text over time and in different contexts.

5.3.2 Using metaphor to talk about modesty on blogs

Our second case study is taken from Helen Ringrow's (2020) chapter '"Beautiful masterpieces": metaphors of the female body in modest fashion blogs'. In this chapter, Ringrow looks at how metaphor is used to describe beauty in blogs written by women who are attempting to present a particular ideological representation of femininity, often informed by a religious worldview, in the case of the study, Christians and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). Ringrow is particularly interested how metaphor is used in these descriptions and draws on a Conceptual Metaphor Framework, (Lakoff and Johnson 1980) to better understand how the bloggers are talking and potentially thinking about something abstract (modesty) in terms of more concrete things. She can then look at the relationship between the metaphors used and how these reflect ways of viewing the world that may or may not be explicitly stated by the bloggers.

To do the analysis, Ringrow uses the Pragglejaz method (Pragglejaz group 2007) of identifying metaphor, closely examining the language of twelve bloggers. She does this by identifying metaphors in the blog texts and then grouping them together to better understand how each individual metaphor a part of thinking is and talking about the world in a particular way. The study provides a particularly good example of how metaphor analysis from a cognitive perspective allows analysts to make connections between the way people write about the world in online spaces and their thoughts and beliefs about the social world. When controlling for variables of gender and religious belief, the analysis shows how relatively large amounts of writing from specific subgroups can be collected in online spaces and provide rich insights about how those groups construct similar identities despite being physically separated.

Although Ringrow identifies several instances of conceptual metaphors for modesty, for this case study, we'll focus on the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A WORK OF ART (which are related to the conceptual metaphor GOD IS AN ARTIST/WOMEN ARE DRAWINGS) that she finds from identifying different metaphors in the writing of various different bloggers. The following are examples she presents of this conceptual metaphor with the name of the blog the extract is taken from in brackets:

1 A truly liberated female is one who knows her worth in God's eyes and views her body as a handcrafted masterpiece designed by God for His glory. [*Girl Defined*]
2 Girls are [not objects to be consumed, but] are precious human beings designed in the image of their loving Creator. [*Girl Defined*]

3 God designed you as a beautiful masterpiece and His plans for you are far greater than anything our raunch culture has to offer. [*Girl Defined*]
4 God calls you, 'His workmanship …' (Ephesians 2:10) and says you are '… fearfully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139: 14). Those are words you will never hear from mainstream society. [*Girl Defined*]
5 We dove into God's word to study what He had to say about our design as women. [*Girl Defined*]
6 God himself created and prepared your body especially for you! [*Modest Goddess*]
7 Our sinful world has taken what God designed to be sacred and precious [*female bodies; female sexuality*] and turned it into something common and cheap. [*Girl Defined*]
8 I write about the importance of modesty because I believe that one of the ways we show respect for ourselves and our Father in Heaven who made us, [*sic*] is by clothing our bodies both respectfully and beautifully. [*Modest Goddess*]

(Ringrow 2020: 27–28)

Thinking first about the relationship between media affordances and the language that is produced on the blogs, we need to recognise 'modesty blogs' as a genre within a larger format for self-publishing that has included particular forms of self-reflection through writing. Blogging is particularly well suited for the writing that Ringrow is studying: women who are discussing and describing their experiences and beliefs about how to live a particular kind of life. Ringrow points out how examples of metaphorical constructions often include both explicit and implicit reference to the bible, an intertextual feature that is also well-suited for long form blogs and written teaching about modesty as this allows the bloggers to make appeals to authority by referring to scripture explicitly and implicitly, and using recognised stylistic and typographic features that indicate belief (such as capitalising 'Father in Heaven' or 'Creator' to indicate 'God').

These affordances are directly related to the mode and medium. Compared to the YouTube videos from the first case study which focused very much on conflict and drama in the discussion of religious faith, the written form of the modest blogs does not promote confrontation in the same way, and the bloggers are rewarded for convivial and helpful posts in a way that the vloggers studied in the Pihlaja book were not. This is reinforced by a mode (long form writing) on a medium (blogging platforms) that doesn't promote drama in the same ways as YouTube videos made by people arguing about religion are promoted through recommendation algorithms. The written form is also well suited for the topic of modesty for these users because it doesn't require any images and they can focus entirely on their message. The mode of written language is also well suited for the analytic framework that Ringrow employs because identifying metaphor using the Praglejaz procedure is much better suited for discrete, individual, written words than spoken language or multimodal discourse where images might be present with the spoken language of a video.

The position of the producer and consumer of this content is also important for how these texts exist in online spaces and how users interact with them. Unlike the first case study, Ringrow does not show examples of users explicitly responding to one another, but she does highlight that the genre of blogs includes substantial followings. This influence creates a unique hierarchy that can be seen in many different online spaces and on which researchers must be aware of, in which although the platforms for social media text production (be it Facebook, or X/Twitter, or YouTube), some users have more reach than others, and while producers and consumers can shift places, dominant producers have more influence than others. This can lead to the production of texts that attempt to co-opt and imitate the language of successful users, potentially creating similarities in the texts and language produced. It can also occur in a way we have already identified in the appropriate of scripture of which the text producer would have originally been a consumer and has revoiced it for the purposes of their own blog.

These producer-consumer relationships in online, mediated spaces can also have recursive relationships with localised, offline communities wherein the ways of talking about things like modesty and religious piety from church communities can be published in online spaces and the reading and consumption of those online messages, like metaphors for modesty, can then influence how individuals talk about those topics on offline spaces. In this sense, although there is not the clear and obvious shift from producer to consumer to producer in the back-and-forth of YouTube video threads, Ringrow shows the relationship between what is read or heard or seen online and what one produces as an account of one's own faith are not necessarily clearly delineated.

The distribution of the blogs is clearly related to the relationship between producer and consumer as the texts are read by people from the same faith communities who can recognise and understand and appreciate the metaphorical ways of speaking about modesty and see them as accurate to their experience. These communities are, Ringrow points out, presenting themselves as different from accepted societal norms. Despite this opposition, the distribution can also avoid the forms of drama seen in the first case study through avoiding conflict and being shared primarily among people who appreciate the positive message and are eager to share it with likeminded people. The content of the blogs then controls for its reach and although it is certainly a possibility for blogs to be parts of arguments among people of different faiths, given the distribution networks, reinforced by all the elements we've discussed in this case study, create a positive, reinforcing context.

Ringrow's study shows how linguistic and stylistic features can emerge out of a specific context for interaction and that analysis of features such as metaphor, with attention to the different elements of the text production can reveal how 'narrative of gender differences and to suggest faith-based views of the female body are radically different from those of mainstream society' (Ringrow 2020: 15). The analysis shows how these

views can develop in ways that are not perceived as threatening or patriarchal, but rather choices made by women to live in ways that they believe comports with their own view of the world and reflects a positive, enlightened view of femininity.

5.3.3 Corpus analysis and stylistic choice in creating an online identity

The final case study is taken from Ilbury's (2020) '"Sassy Queens": Stylistic orthographic variation in Twitter and the enregisterment of AAVE'. This study is similar to Ringrow's above in that the positioning of oneself as having a particular kind of identity is done primarily through the use of written language on a platform which promotes written text over images or video or audio recordings. In both cases, the users in the study are relying almost exclusively on written text to position themselves. Ilbury's study is also similar to the previous case studies in that it focuses on particular users producing texts over time and studies them in comparison to other members of a similar in group. The article features a corpus of 15,804 tweets extracted from the timelines of 10 gay British men and looks at the ways they use African American Vernacular English to create a persona of the 'Sassy Queen'.

Ilbury's study looks at stylistic variation from a sociolinguistic perspective, and specifically the notion of 'enregisterment', the process of linguistic forms becoming associated with particular social identities (Agha 2003) and how people can employ particular ways of speaking to foreground these social identities in different contexts. On Twitter (now X) at the time, users were limited to posts of 140 characters and although the ability to post pictures and videos (as well as links to other content) has been available on the platform for many years, Twitter at the time of Ilbury's study still featured written text as a predominant mode of communication, so his analysis needed to focus on how exactly different stylistic forms could be realised with the limited affordances of Twitter.

Ilbury's study looked specifically at stylistic variation appropriated from AAVE in the tweets by the group of gay men users he studied, identifying a range of different features, including orthographic representation of AAVE phonology. The purpose of the study was to identify these features in the tweets and describe the features, but to also investigate how they operated in interaction and whether they were used in some contexts more than others. Ilbury presents some of the findings in Table 5.1, with the feature, an example of the use in a tweet, and the number of times it was observed in the dataset. These examples provide a helpful starting point to discuss stylistic analysis in this form of media.

Ilbury's study, like the previous articles, shows how the affordances of the platform encourage particular kinds of linguistic practices and his study is interested in how those different affordances give rise to different ways of positioning yourself on the site. Twitter, with its limitation on post length, foregrounding of written text production, and interactional features produces messages that are short,

TABLE 5.1 Phonological features in the dataset

Feature	*Example*	*Count*
(ING)	Sat **Sippin'** ma Starbucks in Soho Square with @User #london #soho #sohosquare #relax	45
Substitution of dental fricatives	Post swim, gym and steam…. Feeling pumped for another night in the big city working **dat** podium!	23
Monophthongization of /aɪ/	Story of **ma**'fuckin life	8
Centralization of /ɛ:/ → /ɚ/	My **huur** done gone CRAY!	9
R-lessness	@User@User y'all need to have a drink. **Lawd** knows y'all thirsty!	4
Consonant cluster reduction	@User don't **stan** near me please xox	4

Source: Ilbury (2020: 253).

conversational, and often include phonological realisations of words, a feature of so-called computer mediated communication that has long been observed in mediated communication that feature short messages, like text messaging (Tagg 2012). This means that variation can occur in spelling to indicate differences, in the case of the tweets, in how particular words should be pronounced, with implications for group membership as accent is associated with the realisation of different identities.

Like the analysis of blog writing, the affordances of Twitter relate specifically to the mode of communication on the platform. If users are limited to written texts, and users are able to differentiate between different personas on the platform, then it follows that by identifying the stylistic features the analyst should be able to identify features of the persona. Non-standard spelling is a useful feature then for analysis because it is in the first instance easy to identify, but also because in the dataset in the study, includes common features of the language of the user group Ilbury is attempting to describe. The interactive features of the Twitter medium also play a central role in drawing out these stylistic features which might not be present in the interaction of the same group of users sending, for example, work emails.

Ilbury's analysis pays particular attention to production and consumption because 'the appearance of AAVE features is conditioned by the specific interactional context' (Ilbury 2020: 252), with Ilbury noting that the use of AAVE in the tweets by the users in the studies occurred more often when the users are interacting with other users, and more particularly, in interactions with other gay men users. Here, Ilbury suggests that the stylistic feature is about performing an in-group identity that is recognised by other members of the in-group. Ilbury shows how this persona is developed from other Internet memes that present a form of stereotyping of the 'angry Black woman' and comes to be associated with a 'sassy' identity, that is 'impudent, saucy, cheeky; outspoken, provocative; conceited, pretentious; self-assured, spirited, bold' (Ilbury 2020: 259). The ability to recognise and appreciate this particular identity is, Ilbury argues, dependent in part on the users, both producers and consumers, ability to recognise it as such.

Ilbury's study highlights how language use on social media can be appropriated without a clear or explicit knowledge of the source of the appropriated language. Although Ilbury does not discuss this in detail, the use of AAVE by the users who are not themselves Black Americans is potentially a problematic form of cultural appropriation and 'digital blackface' (Henning 2025) with white users employing stereotypes about Black culture for comedic effect, without care for considering the effect these stereotypes have on the groups that have been stereotyped. The use of language in one context influences how others in different context may come to be viewed and analysts, in considering the production and consumption of texts might also consider how the production of these texts might have on power imbalances, rather than simply viewing them as neutral stylistic variations.

The interactive nature of the tweets and the use of in-group stylistic features in that interaction also directly relates to distribution and who is likely to see or not see the specific tweets with these features. Whilst earlier research on social media described the notion of 'context collapse' (Marwick and boyd 2011) wherein social media users found themselves in situations where consumers of their social media content included members of different social circles in their lives and created a perceived conflict in attempting to maintain an authentic persona in front of these different audiences, Tagg et al. (2017) have described 'context design' wherein users curate different messages for different audience with different resources, including language choice. The use of AAVE by gay men in their interactions with one another, to evoke a particular persona is a good example of how particular messages can be encoded for particular audiences, even in social media contexts where interactions between people are ostensibly public.

All three of the case studies, and the differences among them show how approaches to media texts in stylistics and methods employed to study those texts are heavily dependent on the different elements that were highlighted in Section 3.2. While all three of the case studies represent 'media' or 'new media' texts, there is ultimately very little that they have in common and each of the researchers required very different sets of tools to investigate the questions they set out to answer. In each case, those preliminary considerations where essential for decisions about what approach to follow and how the research questions about each of the different texts and contexts emerged.

5.4 Concluding remarks

Analysis of media in the future seems especially uncertain in the middle of the 2020s, when technological advancement and socio-political contexts feel particularly in flux. How media use develops over the next ten years (and how language affects and is affected by these developments) will likely be dictated by three different elements: changing technologies, changing cultural contexts, and changing attitudes.

It's easy to recognise the development of technology in the last 10-20 years, in which the internet has become ubiquitous through the use of mobile phone technologies in everyday life. The development of technology has always affected language use, and the near future is no exception. With the growing power and ubiquity of generative AI, this has already had considerable impact on how language is produced and consumed in everyday life. Increasingly, platforms and apps are promoting the use of AI in the production of texts, offering to rewrite user produced texts to be more professional or more appropriate for specific audiences, which may lead to common stylistic features in AI-generated writing (Shah et al. 2023) and difficulty distinguishing between AI and human generated texts (Kumarage et al. 2023). The integration of AI in text production and consumption will therefore be an important area of research as analysts collect data and attempt to understand how these technologies are being employed in media spaces, and user preferences and the production of media for users could become the norm in the same way we've accepted the personalisation of the social media feed.

These technologies will also likely increasingly be employed in the analysis of media texts, both in the ability of analysts to collect data and analyse that data. The extent to which processes of analysis, for example, coding of data, can be automated will have an effect on how much data analysts gather and the kinds of analysis they are subsequently able to do. With this power, however, to analyse large datasets, analysts will still need to make strategic choices about what to include and how. As was seen in the development of corpus linguistics (see Chapter 6), having increasingly larger corpora became less important than ensuring that the corpus an analyst was using was fit for purpose. Working with technology but knowing when to use judgement about which tools are effective for which purposes will be necessary.

The changing cultural contexts of media spaces will continue to be an important area for media stylistics. Whilst media 'bias' has long been an interest for stylisticians, particularly those working in Critical Discourse Analysis, platform bias in online spaces is likely to continue to be a growing area. Increasingly, different platforms develop socio-political reputations, often because of their ownership (the case in point being the transformation of Twitter to X). Whether there continues to be an appetite for broad platforms with appeal across ideological lines will also be an important trend for media stylisticians to study and map, particularly how language differs on different sites and platforms associated with political and ideological movements.

Finally, individual opinions about these changes and the effects they have on user experience and how media is consumed will influence what kinds of texts are produced going forward and what is seen as profitable for different platforms. Because all the media discussed in this chapter is produced, ostensibly, to create profit for companies and individuals, mapping trends and following the development of popular users, sites, platforms, and forms of production will always be a useful location for analysis as understanding why certain texts are produced and consumed

will always require understanding the incentives that users have in producing those kinds of texts. The texts themselves and their similarities to other texts will always provide clues into the reasons behind their popularity and stylistics have the unique and powerful tools to explain and analyse these changes over time.

5.5 Further reading

A good start to contemporary media stylistics is Ringrow and Pihlaja (2020), which has a range of approaches to and examples of different text types. Lambrou and Durant (2014) is the predecessor to this text and offers very strong examples of analysis of traditional media data. Davies' (2012) provides a very good book-length treatment of News Discourse. Bednarek's (2018) work on TV dialogue also provides a very good example of close linguistic analysis of media discourse. Finally, Grieve and Woodfield's (2023) work on 'fake news' provides a good example of how a particular discourse type can identified across several different media platforms, with shared features that can be recognised as a single discreet category.

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6

CORPUS STYLISTICS

In this chapter, we will consider

- **theoretical similarities between stylistics and corpus linguistics that have led to the emergence of 'corpus stylistics';**
- **practical considerations relating to off-the-shelf software, reference corpora, and corpus building;**
- **key analytical techniques (concordancing, collocation, keyness analysis) and how they can be used in both literary and non-literary studies.**

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we discuss corpus stylistics, a growing sub-field dedicated to the combination of stylistics and corpus linguistics. We approach corpus stylistics from the perspective of introducing some of the ways in which methods from corpus linguistics may be used in service of stylistic research. Corpus linguistics is the empirical study of collections of machine-readable texts, sampled for the purpose of linguistic analysis (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 1). A corpus (plural *corpora*) is designed to represent how language is used in a particular target textual domain (Biber 1993), such that it is possible to observe linguistic patterns across large stretches or multiple samples of that domain – patterns that may be difficult to notice when looking at textual samples in isolation.

A key feature of corpus linguistics is that it facilitates, via computation, the analysis of datasets far larger than would be possible manually, often making use of quantitative approaches to both describe the properties of the corpus you're working with and, where appropriate, make statistical inferences about the wider textual domain your corpus is designed to represent. Specifically, since corpus methods involve the use of machine-readable texts, corpus linguists are predominantly interested in

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whatever insight can be gleaned from the orthographic representation of language, i.e. lexis, meaning that corpora are typically used to answer questions such as:

'what is most often talked about in this context?'

'what attitudes are expressed or implied?'

'how are texts structured?'

(Hunston 2022: 2)

As a result, the quantitative observations afforded by corpus linguistics allow the researcher to find out which linguistic features are typical or unusual within a given discourse context, by revealing, for instance, the lexico-grammatical properties of an entire language variety, the distinctive features of language as used in a specific communicative context, or indeed the linguistic style of a particular author. However, corpus linguistics is not merely about 'counting words'; rather, it sits at the interface between both quantitative and qualitative approaches to the study of language, and many theoretical frameworks – originally developed in the qualitative analysis of language – are routinely applied in both the observation and interpretation of quantitative findings (see e.g. Egbert et al. 2020). This means that corpus linguistics is highly versatile as a set of methodological approaches to the study of textual data.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the history of corpus linguistics is that of an increasing variety of interdisciplinary application. Early applications saw corpus techniques inform research in lexicography (e.g. Sinclair 1987) and language teaching, learning, and assessment (O'Keeffe et al. 2007), reflecting the 'inward' impacts of corpus linguistics in 'affecting the study of language(s) itself' (Hunston 2022: 2). One of the major impacts of early corpus research was to show that human intuition about language use is far from reliable:

> Indeed, the contrast exposed between the impressions of language detail noted by people, and the evidence compiled objectively from texts is huge and systematic. It leads one to suppose that human intuition about language is highly specific, and not at all a good guide to what actually happens when the same people actually use the language.
>
> *(Sinclair 1991: 4)*

The illuminating nature of corpus linguistics has led to its application in a range of contexts, including those traditionally addressed under the umbrella of stylistics. Over the last few decades, what has come to be known as *corpus stylistics* has grown to become 'a recognisable field within stylistics' (McIntyre and Walker 2019: 1), defined as 'the application of theories, models and frameworks from stylistics in corpus analysis' (McIntyre and Walker 2019: 15). Early proponents of corpus stylistics drew attention to the complementarity of corpus methods and stylistics, typically focussing on the analysis of literary texts. Stubbs (2005), for example, argued that the findings derived from the combination of corpus linguistics and stylistics 'sometimes document more systematically what literary critics already know […] but they

can also reveal otherwise invisible features of long texts' (Stubbs 2005: 22). This demonstrates what McIntyre and Walker call *corpus-based stylistics*, i.e. 'any corpus stylistic study that treats the target text as a corpus' (McIntyre and Walker 2019: 119).

Mahlberg (2007: 4) describes what she calls the three 'pillars' of a corpus theoretical framework, which 'provide a bridge to literary stylistics and contribute to further developing the notion of corpus stylistics':

1 language is a social phenomenon;
2 meaning and form are associated; and
3 a corpus linguistic description of language prioritises lexis.

Mahlberg (2007) suggests that corpus linguistics lends itself to stylistics because both approaches share an interest in the association between meaning and form, evidence of which can be observed in patterns of co-occurrence between lexical items. Specifically, she argues that there are two dimensions of meaning – subjective (individual) meaning and social (conventional) meaning – both of which can be observed in corpora, allowing us to 'distinguish between individual styles and conventional patterns and norms' (Mahlberg 2007: 4). Indeed, if we think of style as 'a property of texts constituted by an ensemble of formal features which can be observed quantitatively or qualitatively' (Berenike Herrmann et al. 2015: 14), then we can see how well-suited the 'corpus theoretical approach' (Mahlberg 2007: 4) is. Under this approach, which makes it possible to form generalisations about the norms of a language variety (based on the patterns observed in a suitably representative corpus), we can compare our data against those general patterns to identify 'deviations from the norms of language use' (Wynne 2006: 224). This approach, known as *corpus-informed stylistics* (McIntyre and Walker 2019: 26), involves the comparison of select literary texts with a more general reference corpus to reveal 'textual features that are especially characteristic of an author, particular text, or even a single character' (Biber 2011: 16), thus supporting or challenging 'an intuitive response to a text' (McIntyre and Walker 2019: 26).

In this chapter, we will demonstrate how even relatively light-touch corpus methods can fruitfully contribute to research in stylistics. The remainder of the chapter is structured as follows. Section 6.2 covers preliminary considerations relating to corpus tools and reference corpora that are likely to be useful for stylistic research, as well as the major practical steps in building your own corpus. Section 6.3 presents three case studies that demonstrate various analytical approaches to corpus stylistics in both literary and non-literary contexts. Section 6.4 summarises the main themes of the chapter and points you towards further resources to support your research in corpus stylistics.

6.2 Preliminary considerations

While demonstrating some of the ways in which corpus data can be explored in the case studies (Section 6.3), we discuss some of the practical considerations when working with both existing corpora and when compiling a corpus of your own. When reading these considerations, bear in mind that the selection or design of a suitable corpus should be informed directly by your research questions (McEnery

and Brezina 2022: 7) as well as any necessary ethical considerations described in Chapter 2. In the following sections, we discuss some of the major corpus tools and reference corpora (Section 6.2.1) and analytical approaches (Section 6.2.2) before walking you through the main steps in the process of building your own corpus (Section 6.2.3).

6.2.1 Corpus tools and reference corpora

While there is 'a strong case to be made for developing the programming skills that would make a reliance on existing software unnecessary' (McIntyre and Walker 2019: 20), much research in corpus stylistics (and corpus linguistics generally) is conducted using off-the-shelf software packages and online platforms. Tools that offer a range of typical analytical functions include the software packages *AntConc* (Anthony 2024), *#LancsBox X* (Brezina and Platt 2024), and *WordSmith Tools* (Scott 2024), while popular online platforms include *CQPweb* (Hardie 2012), *English-Corpora.org* (Davies 2009), and *Sketch Engine* (Kilgarriff et al. 2014). Most corpus tools facilitate the analysis of user-uploaded data, and some additionally offer access to a variety of pre-existing reference corpora. *Sketch Engine*, for example, provides access to over 300 corpora of nearly 100 different languages, and *English-Corpora.org* offers corpora including the one-billion-word *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)* and corpora of television and movie scripts. Both platforms are among those that provide access to the *British National Corpus* (BNC Consortium 2007), a 100-million-word sample of written and spoken British English compiled in the 1990s, while the second edition, compiled in the 2010s (the *BNC2014*; Brezina et al. 2021; Love et al. 2017), is available via *#LancsBox X*.

The above examples represent general corpus tools that have been used in stylistics research, among many other interdisciplinary applications. However, they were not developed specifically with stylistic applications in mind. A good example of a tool purpose-built for corpus stylistics is *CLiC* (*Corpus Linguistics in Context*; Mahlberg et al. 2020), an online platform designed to 'combine corpus methods and approaches in literary linguistics in a truly integrated fashion' (Mahlberg et al. 2016: 435). *CLiC* provides access to historical literary corpus data, including:

- DNov (Dicken's Novels)
- ChiLit (19th Century Children's Literature Corpus)
- 19C (19th Century Reference Corpus)
- AAW (African American Writers 1892–1912)

What is particularly valuable about *CLiC* for corpus stylistics is its approach to the study of characterisation:

> We developed CLiC as part of a project with the overall research question: how can corpus methods be combined with literary linguistic approaches to produce new insights into the creation of meanings in literary texts? The specific area of

> focus for our work was the investigation of textual patterns in the creation of fictional characters in prose fiction, particularly textual representations in terms of speech and body language, using Dickens's novels as a case study.
>
> *(Mahlberg et al. 2016: 435)*

One of the ways in which characterisation can be accessed is by examining textual representations of speech acts in narrative fiction. *CLiC* facilitates this by automatically distinguishing between narrator text, quotes, and suspensions (i.e. 'an interruption of a character's speech by narrator text' (Mahlberg et al. 2016: 443), e.g.:

> 'My dear,' *said Mr. Sowerberry, deferentially,* 'this is the boy from the workhouse […]
>
> *(Oliver Twist,* Charles Dickens 1838; suspension in italics*)*

This makes it possible to isolate the suspensions for further analysis, including the observation of patterns in the use of 'textual markers of character-building and mind-modelling' (Mahlberg et al. 2016: 450). For example, Ruano (2018) uses this function of *CLiC* to demonstrate how Dickens utilises suspensions not only in reported speech but also in reported thought. Ruano argues that this use of suspensions performs an important function as part of Dickens' style, creating 'synchronicity between characters' thoughts and their body language' (Ruano 2018: 342), e.g.:

> 'Now I wonder,' *thought Mr Pecksniff, looking at him with a wistful face,* 'whether this is all he has to say!'
>
> *(Martin Chuzzlewit,* Charles Dickens, 1844; suspension in italics*)*

Figure 6.1 shows how to retrieve such suspensions in *CLiC*, by simply searching for suspensions that contain the search term 'thought'.

6.2.2 Corpus analysis

Although they vary in other ways, most mainstream corpus tools enable a common set of core analytical functions. In this Section, we introduce three techniques for exploring corpus data which are among the most useful in corpus stylistics. All three of these feature in the case studies to follow (Section 6.3).

6.2.2.1 Concordance

A fundamental approach to the analysis of corpus data is the study of concordance lines. This involves the retrieval of every instance of a specified linguistic item (e.g. word, multi-word unit) in a corpus; each instance is displayed in a central column, with the context immediately preceding and following the search term (node)

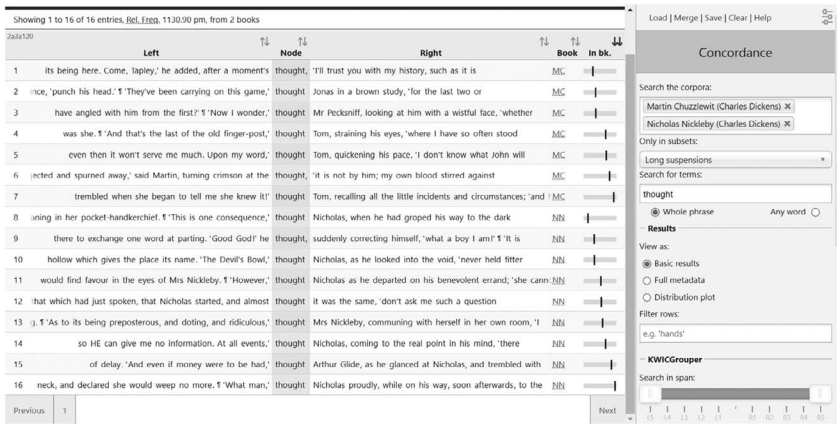

FIGURE 6.1 Occurrences of 'thought' in suspensions in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Nicholas Nickleby*

Source: Reproduced in *CLiC* following Ruano (2018: 341).

displayed in columns to the left and right. As demonstrated in Figure 6.2, each row displays a single concordance line, i.e. a single instance of the item you've searched for, with enough of the immediate co-text displayed on either side to see how that instance of the word is used in the corpus.

```
1  ain and again so that Bond screamed and his body jangled in the chair like a mar
2   was afraid. Afraid that his senses and his body would not respond to her sensual
3  ils dug into the palms of his hands and his body sweated with shame. Well,
4  f his bathing-trunks and looked down at his body. There were only a few traces l
5  vil effects from the terrible battering his body had received. He had said that
6  g his eyes, feeling the cold water comb his body and his hair. The mirror o
7  d closed his eyes and mentally explored his body. The worst pain was in his wris
8   he admitted, why he had waited to give his body a chance to respond, why he had
9  eet to his neck, melting the tension in his body and calming his still twanging
10 rited and weak in resolve as well as in his body. He had had to take too much in
11  and a deep throb of pain started up in his body. Mathis realized that he w
12  given a local anaesthetic. The rest of his body ached dully as if he had been b
13 d his arms were free. The lower half of his body was still shrouded in the oblon
14 less. His buttocks and the underpart of his body protruded through the seat of t
15 no colour in Bond's face or anywhere on his body above the waist. There was a fa
16 nt, muscles stood out in knots all over his body and his toes and fingers clench
17 d perspiration started to bead all oVer his body. He uttered a deep groan.
18 nched until they were quite white. Then his body sagged and perspiration started
19 rom the passion which had swept through his body. He was torn between the desire
20  he wanted coldly to put the repairs to his body to the final test. He thought t
21       he was tired. He always knew when his body or his mind had had enough and
```

FIGURE 6.2 Concordance lines for 'his body' in *Casino Royale* by Ian Fleming, 1953

Source: Mahlberg and McIntyre (2011: 220).

By sorting concordance lines in various ways, it is possible to observe phraseological patterns that reveal typical uses, meanings, and associations of the search term – such patterns may be very useful in stylistic research. As argued by Mahlberg et al. (2016: 438), the analysis of concordance data is highly compatible with stylistics because it allows you to see both an overall pattern at a more schematic level and provides the contexts for you to undertake granular analysis of one or more examples of its use in the corpus. Returning to Figure 6.2, which comes from Mahlberg and McIntyre's (2011) corpus stylistic analysis of the James Bond novel *Casino Royale*, the comprehensive retrieval of every instance of the word 'body' in the novel (including all instances of 'his body', as shown in Figure 6.2) supported Mahlberg and McIntyre's interpretation that Fleming's use of *body* separates James Bond's mind from his physical self, which is framed as a machine.

6.2.2.2 Collocation

Collocation is the tendency for words to co-occur repeatedly. Repeated patterns of co-occurrence may be observed qualitatively through the analysis of concordance lines. For example, look at Figure 6.3, a screenshot from the software tool *#LancsBox X*, which we have used to search for the word 'love' in a 20-million-word sub-corpus of the BNC2014 comprising over 1,000 fiction texts. Notice that all but three instances of 'love' in the sample are preceded by the preposition 'in'

Text: subgenre	Left	Node	Right
fiction: historical	at the notion that he might abandon her and find	love	with a lesser mortal. 'Get out,' she snarled, picking up
fiction: poetry	friendly though disconcerting snort. 'She's a mad girl in	love	with a man she's never seen,' said George, 'and
fiction: women's	woman my age, but you see I am deeply in	love	with a man who's been out of the country
fiction: sci-fi	who'd predicted that she'd one day fall in	love	with a man who bore the Burton surname. Isabel continued, "
fiction: women's	and faltered after that. After all, who wants to make	love	with a man who would clearly prefer to wear protective
fiction: mystery	his windows. When she was twenty she had been in	love	with a man, almost as much in love as she
fiction: women's	things I shouldn't have,' she admits, 'like falling in	love	with a married man and thinking I'd never get
fiction: miscellaneous	secrets,' she said. 'But I thought you must be in	love	with a married man, back in the sixties.' Maria nodded. '
fiction: miscellaneous	it was, or might have been. Gaius had been in	love	with a memory for four years, but it was all
fiction: miscellaneous	rather be on my own. Or - you know - in unrequited	love	with a parrot. Or one of those little lemurs with
fiction: sci-fi	Who was it on the phone last night?' Falling in	love	with a person is hard. Falling in love with a
fiction: miscellaneous	for the war effort. There she met and fell in	love	with a Polish flying officer called Samuel Markova. He was
fiction: adventure	of course I could not proclaim that I was in	love	with a slave girl who had been a rich man
fiction: women's	's Christmas and because I've just fallen hopelessly in	love	with a stranger at a bus stop, I blow him
fiction: humour	he was gradually discovering he loved. Could one fall in	love	with a whole country-just like that? He wondered about that. "
fiction: historical	were a dangerous chemical. How can a whore fall in	love	with a whore? Then one Sunday afternoon, the sun shining,
fiction: women's	is.' Fiona smirked. 'I assume you mean he's in	love	with a woman and not his yacht, darling. I knew
fiction: women's	say: "Son, you can tell when a man's in	love	with a woman by the way he glows when she
fiction: miscellaneous	faithful. Sean had to be persuaded. He had fallen in	love	with a woman he'd met as a trainee. but

FIGURE 6.3 Screenshot from *LancsBox X* showing a sample of concordance lines for 'love' in the BNC2014 fiction sub-corpus

and followed by the preposition 'with' and the determiner 'a'. Among these, you may also notice that:

- eight instances are preceded by some variant of the verb FALL (e.g. 'fall', 'fallen', 'fell', 'falling');
- five instances are followed by 'man' (and 'married man' in two additional cases); and
- three instances are followed by 'woman'.

Although only a small sample (there are nearly 9,000 instances of 'love' in the BNC2014 fiction sub-corpus!), we can start to see that certain words (e.g. FALL, 'man', 'woman') appear to co-occur repeatedly with 'love'. However, using concordancing to generate a comprehensive analysis of co-occurrence patterns for all instances would, in this case, be very time-consuming. An alternative approach is to analyse collocation statistically, using what is known as an *association measure*, a variety of which are typically offered in off-the-shelf corpus tools. Association measures calculate 'the strength of association between words based on different aspects of the co-occurrence relationship' (Brezina 2018: 67).

As shown above, frequency is one important aspect of the co-occurrence relationship, but looking at the frequency of co-occurrence between words alone is not necessarily the most appropriate way to approach the study of collocation. Another way to think about collocation is to consider the *exclusivity* of the co-occurrence relationship, so to speak. This can be done using *LogDice*, one of several association measures commonly used to identify collocates (see Brezina 2018: 70). For our purposes, it's not important to understand any detail behind this measure other than that, in addition to co-occurrence frequency, it also takes into account the overall frequency of node word and the collocate in the corpus. This means that a relatively infrequent co-occurrence between two words may nonetheless be identified as a strong collocation if their co-occurrence is relatively exclusive, i.e. if those words rarely (if ever) occur without one another.

The value of taking exclusivity into account when looking for collocates can be demonstrated by looking at Table 6.1, which shows the top ten collocates of 'love' in the BNC2014 fiction sub-corpus as measured using LogDice (within a span of five words before or after 'love'). The top ten collocates are not simply those that co-occur with 'love' the most frequently, as demonstrated by the 2nd ranked collocate ('fall'), which co-occurs with 'love' only 145 times – fewer times than most of the other top ten collocates, including the 10th ranked collocate ('with'), which co-occurs with 'love' over 1,000 times. The main reason that 'fall' is ranked so highly is because, as a proportion of its overall frequency in the BNC2014 fiction sub-corpus (2,462), a relatively high proportion of those instances co-occur with 'love', i.e. they are strongly associated with one another.

TABLE 6.1 Top ten collocates of 'love' in the BNC2014 fiction sub-corpus, ranked by LogDice

Rank	*Collocate*	*Frequency (as collocate)*	*Frequency (overall)*
1	*you*	3,409	253,442
2	*fall*	145	2,462
3	*i*	4,828	434,621
4	*fallen*	110	1,634
5	*life*	225	13,267
6	*much*	272	20,745
7	*falling*	93	1,931
8	*'d*	565	57,544
9	*fell*	108	4,087
10	*with*	1,199	138,078

Three other variants of FALL ('fallen', 'falling', and 'fell') also appear among the top ten. This strengthens the evidence in favour of our initial observation (from the small sample of concordance lines) by confirming that indeed there is a strong collocational relationship between FALL and 'love' in the BNC2014 fiction sub-corpus.

In the context of stylistics, we refer to the seminal work by Louw (1993), who describes the phenomenon of *semantic prosody*. This is where certain words/phrases may collocate with words from a particular semantic field often enough that the collocates imbue the word/phrase with a 'consistent aura of meaning' (Louw 1993: 30). For example, Louw draws upon evidence from a large reference corpus to show that, in general usage, the phrasal verb 'bent on' has a negative semantic prosody because 'the pursuits that people are *bent on* are almost always negative or unpleasant in some way' (e.g. 'destroying', 'engulfing', 'mischief', 'revenge', 'villainy') (Louw 1993: 39). Louw argues that writers may exploit 'our prior knowledge as readers' (Louw 1993: 34) to create ironic effects by combining words in ways that are contrary to their typical semantic prosody (e.g. 'austerely bent on self-improvement').

6.2.2.3 Keyness

Keyness analysis is a method of comparing the frequencies of linguistic items (typically words) in two corpora. It tells you which words are significantly more or less frequent in one corpus (the *target corpus*) compared to another corpus (the *reference corpus*), relative to the overall size of the corpora. Words which are found to have a significant difference in frequency between the corpora are known as *key words* (those which are more frequent in the target corpus than the reference corpus are *positive* key words; those which are less

frequent are *negative* key words). Keyness analysis allows for the quantitative identification of 'salient features' (Mackiewicz and Thompson 2018: 190) that act as signposts to potentially interesting themes that may be explored qualitatively (Baker 2018).

Keyness is usually measured according to the significance of the difference in relative frequency between words in the target and reference corpora. A significance test estimates the probability of obtaining a difference in frequency at least as extreme as the difference you have observed if no real difference exists (in other words, the probability that the difference could have occurred, in essence, by chance). If the probability (expressed as a *p*-value) is lower than our accepted threshold (typically $p < 0.05$), then we can have a high level of confidence (95% or above) that 'the observed frequency difference is dependable – or, to look at this issue from a different perspective, whether the item is frequent enough and/or the corpora are large enough for the observed differences to be dependable' (Gabrielatos 2018: 238).

While a significance test tells you whether a difference is likely to be dependable, it does not tell you how important or large the difference is. Therefore, a separate metric, effect size, is used to measure how big the observed difference is, regardless of whether it is statistically significant. This is useful because a word can have a statistically significant frequency difference that is nonetheless fairly small, meaning that it is not so useful for revealing the most distinctive features of your target corpus. Therefore, it is good practice to measure keyness using both a significance test and measure of effect size (Gabrielatos 2018: 238). Typically, a significance test can be used to identify the words with significant differences between the corpora (i.e. the key words). Then, the key words can be ranked according to a measure of effect size, so you can see which among the key words have the biggest difference in frequencies.

In corpus stylistics, one application of this approach has been demonstrated in the study of characterisation, whereby keyness analysis is used to reveal distinctive lexical and grammatical features (i.e. style-markers) of character speech. Culpeper (2002), for example, identified the key words for six of the characters in William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. In this case, keyness analysis was not used to compare corpora in the traditional sense; rather, Culpeper isolated the speech of each of the six characters (Romeo, Juliet, Capulet, Nurse, Mercutio, and Friar Lawrence) and created, for each character, a 'corpus' of their speech. Then, for each character's 'corpus', he ran a separate keyness analysis, comparing that character's target corpus against a reference corpus comprising the speech of all the other characters in the play (e.g. Juliet was compared to a reference corpus comprising the speech of all characters in the play, excluding Juliet). This approach demonstrates how stylistic research can benefit from corpus linguistics; in this case, Culpeper showed how keyness analysis 'offers an empirical way of establishing lexical and grammatical character patterns' (Culpeper 2002: 27).

6.2.3 Building a corpus

Aside from using corpus tools to access and analyse existing datasets, you may want to conduct research on some data of your own. This section covers the main practical issues you should consider when building a corpus for stylistic research. We assume that you have already decided which texts you'd like to include in your corpus and addressed the key considerations relating to research design and ethics discussed in Chapter 2.

6.2.3.1 Texts

Once you have decided on the texts you want to include in your corpus, here are a few things you should consider. Firstly, you should check whether or not they are available in a digital format, since all of your data will need to be electronically-readable in order to be subject to corpus analysis. Depending upon the source and copyright status of your texts (see Chapter 2), you may be able to copy content from webpages or download and convert texts from an e-book format. Another option is to download texts from an online repository such as *Project Gutenberg* (Project Gutenberg, 2025), a library of over 75,000 free eBooks of mostly older (c. pre-1930s) literary texts that no longer have copyright protection (see Love and Busso 2024, for a demonstration of building a corpus from *Project Gutenberg*). Other repositories of relevance to stylistics include the *Oxford Text Archive* (University of Oxford, 2021) (literary and linguistic datasets), *The Daily Script* (The Daily Script, 2025) (TV and movie scripts), and the *Forensic Linguistic Databank (FOLD)* (Petykó et al. 2022).

If it is not possible to source digital copies of your texts, data from hard copies will need to be digitised, i.e. converted into an electronically readable format. For relatively small amounts of data, this can be done by typing out the text manually. For larger amounts of data, it will likely be quicker to scan the texts and use optical character recognition (OCR) software to automatically convert the images into machine-readable text.

6.2.3.2 Metadata

In addition to the texts, think about any information *about* the texts that you need to collect to facilitate your research. Known as 'metadata', this is information that typically applies to each text as a unit of analysis and accounts for any variation between categories of texts in your corpus that is relevant to the research design. For example, a corpus of poetry may include metadata referring to bibliographic information such as the poem's title, author, publication date, and the name of the collection in which it was published, among others. To make things easier later on, you should decide what types of metadata you need beforehand, and systematically record the metadata (e.g. in a spreadsheet) while you collect your texts.

6.2.3.3 Cleaning

Once you have collected your texts and recorded your metadata, you need to work with your data to get it ready for analysis. It's a good idea to start by saving your texts into plain text (*.txt*) files; this makes it easier to prepare your texts consistently and reduces the chance of complications when uploading your files to a corpus tool.

At this stage, you should remember that corpus tools will treat any and all textual material in your files as 'data', including anything present that does not actually constitute the linguistic content of the texts you have gathered. You should check if your files need to be 'cleaned' to remove any redundant material such as boilerplate (repetitive elements like headers, footers, running titles, page numbers) and any other potentially irrelevant material such as contents pages and copyright notices. Such material should be removed as it may impact upon the accuracy of the analysis, for instance relating to frequency counts and co-occurrence measures, 'as well as impinging on the corpus's representativeness in a more general sense' (McEnery and Brookes 2022: 43). Boilerplate removal is offered as a feature of corpus software *WordSmith Tools* as well as standalone tools (e.g. *jusText*, Pomikálek 2011); alternatively, you could clean your texts manually in a text editor using regular expressions. Useful programs for batch-editing plain text files include *Notepad++* (Ho 2025) or *Sublime Text* (Sublime 2025).

6.2.3.4 Encoding

Once you have ensured that your files contain only the linguistic material you want to analyse, you should decide whether it would be helpful to add any descriptive information that may come in handy during the analysis. This includes your metadata as well as any relevant textual markup (structural features of your texts, e.g. paragraph boundaries) or linguistic annotations (e.g. word class). Crucially, any such information should not simply be added as raw text in your files, otherwise you will run into the same issue you have just avoided by cleaning your texts, because the corpus tool will not be able to distinguish between this information and your linguistic data. Instead, this information needs to be encoded in a special format known as a markup language, the most common of which in corpus research being *eXtensible Markup Language* (*XML*) (see Hardie 2014 for an accessible overview).

Whether or not encoding is necessary (and if so, to what extent) depends upon what you need to be able to do with your data during the analysis. If either are deemed necessary, researchers typically deal with the encoding of metadata and/or textual markup first, followed by linguistic annotation. This is because the most common types of linguistic annotation can be done automatically, including as an in-built step in the creation of a new corpus in some of the off-the-shelf corpus tools (e.g. *#LancsBox*, *Sketch Engine*).

6.3 Case studies

The case studies that follow serve to demonstrate a range of applications of corpus methods in stylistic research. The first case study (Section 6.3.1) is drawn from *The Language of Siegfried Sassoon* (Giovanelli 2022). Much of Giovanelli's study involves the analysis of individual texts using frameworks from cognitive stylistics (see Chapter 4); however, one chapter (*Blame*) notably includes the use of corpus methods to supplement the analysis of the collection *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* (Sassoon, 1918). This entails a corpus-based stylistic analysis of the collection itself, which is compiled as a small corpus totalling fewer than 6,000 words, as well as the analysis of a general reference corpus, thus providing accessible examples of both *corpus-based* and *corpus-informed* stylistics which make use of standard corpus tools. In contrast, the second case study (Section 6.3.2) discusses a study by Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021), which makes use of the specialised corpus stylistics platform *CLiC* to investigate the representation of motherhood in a large corpus of 19th century children's literature. Finally, the third case study (Section 6.3.3) departs from the analysis of literary language to demonstrate how stylistic research that is situated beyond literary linguistics may also benefit from corpus methods. In this case, we discuss the use of corpus methods in *Reading Habits in the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Boucher et al. 2024) to aid the analysis of responses to a largescale UK public survey about the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on reading practices.

6.3.1 Literary corpus stylistics with standard corpus tools

In his analysis of Sassoon's *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*, Giovanelli (2022) uses the software package *AntConc* (see Section 6.2.1) to retrieve concordances of the words 'kill', 'die', and 'death' to search for patterns in how blame is assigned for the death of soldiers across the entire collection. The concordances are then interpreted through the lens of Cognitive Grammar to interpret construal effects, specifically examining agency and patient roles in action chains.

Table 6.2 shows the five instances of the verb 'killed' retrieved from searching the corpus for the lemma KILL. Considering that 'killed' 'is a transitive verb that forms a prototypical action chain with an agent as energy source, a patient as energy

TABLE 6.2 Concordance for 'killed' in *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*

No.	*Left context*	*Node*	*Right context*
1	mourn our laurelled memories when we're	killed	. You can't believe that British
2	of ghosts among the trees, - Not people	killed	In battle, - they're in France, - But
3	back to life again. When Dick was	killed	last week he looked like that,
4	the dark. Cheero! I wish they'd	killed	you in a decent show
5	Stretcher-bearers wanted? Someone	killed	?' Five minutes ago I heard

Source: Adapted from Giovanelli (2022: 126).

sink, and an optional set of other circumstantial information' (Giovanelli 2022: 125), do you notice anything interesting about the concordances? Look closer and you'll notice that only in example (4) is the agent of the killing process mentioned ('I wish **they**'d killed you'), and even then, the use of the third person pronoun 'they' renders the referent (i.e. the agent) ambiguous. The remaining examples entirely omit mention of the agent through agentless passives (examples 1 and 3) or use of 'killed' as a stative-adjectival participle (examples 2 and 5). Therefore, all five instances of 'killed' demonstrate agent-based mystification.

What about the patients? In contrast, all five examples encode a patient ('we', 'people', 'Dick', 'you', 'someone'); however, only example (3) encodes a fully specified referent using a proper noun ('When **Dick** was killed last week'). The remaining examples use pronouns (examples 1, 4, and 5) and a noun (example 2), resulting in lower specificity of the referents; each of these are interpreted as types of patient-based mystification, albeit to a less radical extent than that observed in the context of agency.

Giovanelli (2022) subsequently presents similarly systematic and thorough analyses of the concordances for the intransitive verb DIE (15 instances) and noun DEATH (10 instances), revealing similar patterns of agent-based mystification. For example, the absolute construal (Langacker 2008: 385) afforded by the intransitive verb 'died', which grammatically omits an external force and foregrounds the patient (e.g. 'But they **died**, – Not one by one'), further contributes to a framing of death that downplays agency. Combining these observations with those of 'killed', the patterns of construal revealed by the concordances lead Giovanelli (2022) to conclude:

> The clause-level grammar of *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* would then suggest that blame in the poems is largely not directly assigned and that responsibility for the events which marked some of Sassoon's most explicit and celebrated war poems is downplayed. Although explicit in their presentation of death and suffering, instead of assigning blame, the poems largely appear to conceal it.
> *(Giovanelli 2022: 131)*

A little later in the same chapter, Giovanelli (2022) turns to a single poem ('Does It Matter?') from *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* to explore Sassoon's implicit strategies for assigning blame. The title of the poem (you can easily find this online) is used as a question at beginning of the first line of each of three stanzas. In the first stanza, the question is followed by the verb 'losing' and the noun phrase 'your legs'. Giovanelli argues that the use of the second person possessive determiner 'your' may refer simultaneously both to a generic 'you' and to the reader, which 'gives rise to an ironic interpretation' (Giovanelli 2022: 136) by encouraging a non-literal reading of the opening lines of each stanza. He argues that the non-literal reading may be enabled, at least in part, by the 'likely discourse knowledge' used by readers (Giovanelli 2022: 138) when they approach the poem.

To support his argument, Giovanelli (2022) again makes use of corpus linguistics, but this time not as a method of analysing Sassoon's poetry as the object of

study. Rather, he is interested in observing how the verb LOSE is typically used in British English – specifically, what are the typical objects of this verb? He does so by identifying the nouns that most strongly collocate with LOSE in the British National Corpus, a 100-million-word general sample of British English (see Section 6.2.1). Referring to the opening line of the poem, Giovanelli (2022) uses the Word Sketch function in *Sketch Engine* to retrieve the top 40 objects of the verb lemma LOSE in the British National Corpus (ranked according to collocational strength):

> *job, weight, sight, control, temper, interest, seat, money, touch, battle, life, ground, confidence, balance, sense, patience, power, grip, lot, contact, faith, time, track, game, opportunity, election, vote, everything, pound, stone, count, nerve, right, way, sleep, leg, baby, ability, home, love*

If we accept the British National Corpus as a good enough representation of 'general' British English (albeit from several decades later than when Sassoon wrote the poem), we can appreciate Giovanelli's interpretation that, in typical usage, the verb *lose* has a negative semantic prosody, and *leg* is one of only a few collocates among the top 40 that is a concrete noun. Further inspection of concordance lines for LOSE + LEG reveals evidence of its euphemistic function as a vague referent to traumatic injury (including in war contexts) e.g.:

> When she learned that her brother, at the very end of the battle, had **lost** only a **leg** and not his life, the relief was great.
>
> I thought about the Commando **losing** his **leg** this morning and the two wounded being loaded on to the jeep.
>
> He **lost** both **legs** in the war, and now has more than one hundred window boxes within easy reach at his home near Banbury

Returning to Sassoon, the observations from the corpus reinforce the ironic reading of the poem; the opening line similarly downplays the severity of the injury, crucially by omitting reference to any external source of the process. Giovanelli (2022) argues that the combination of two observations, (a) the negative semantic prosody of the process of 'losing' and (b) its use to refer to the injury euphemistically (both supported by evidence from a large reference corpus)

> lead to the strong readerly inference that this is not intentional: one doesn't desire to 'lose' one's legs. […] [T]his lack of intentionality acts as a discourse reference point that guides interpretation of the rest of the poem. […] It seems to me, then, that reading 'Does It Matter?' as an angry poem, as a poem of protest, as a poem of blame, and as an ironic poem means re-evaluating and reconstruing each of the questions that begins each stanza in turn, guided by the initial reference point so that the conditions offered as mitigations to the questions are

> ignored, the evidence presented for them rejected as false, and blame attached not to the injured body part but to those who both cause the injuries to occur through supporting war and try to downplay the effects of those injuries. In short, this means rejecting the entire discourse of war as patriotic endeavour.
>
> *(Giovanelli 2022: 138–139)*

We chose Giovanelli's analysis of *Counter-Attack and Other Poems* as our first case study because it effectively demonstrates how even relatively minimal use of corpus methods can test (and potentially strengthen) interpretations derived substantively from the qualitative examination of individual texts. For the analysis of downplayed agency in *Counter-Attack and Other Poems*, Giovanelli's brief departure from traditional stylistic approaches is motivated by the desire to focus 'more broadly on a range of poems within a collection rather than using individual poems as case studies' (Giovanelli 2022: 124); as such, corpus stylistics offers 'a more nuanced analysis by highlighting patterns that would be difficult to see using a manual approach' (Giovanelli 2022: 124). For the analysis of 'Does It Matter?', Giovanelli's use of the British National Corpus demonstrates the value of a largescale reference corpus as a source of evidence for typical (and atypical) usage against which the text under scrutiny can be compared, adding weight to our appreciation of how readers may approach the text.

6.3.2 Literary corpus stylistics with CLiC

Our second case study, by Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021), demonstrates the use of a specialised corpus stylistics tool, *CLiC* (introduced in Section 6.2.1). Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021) explore the representation of mothers and the broader construct of motherhood in *CLiC*'s 19th Century Children's Literature (ChiLit) Corpus, which comprises 71 children's books published between 1826 and 1911 and totals over 4 million words. The ChiLit Corpus is selected as a window through which to observe 'social norms and the gendered structure of society' (Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021: 120), under the assumption that children's literature is likely to make frequent reference to family roles of significance to children, including mothers. The rationale Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021) offer for their approach clearly articulates one of the major methodological spaces that corpus linguistics occupies within stylistics, by facilitating a birds' eye view, so to speak, over large collections of texts.

> Instead of studying portrayals of individual mothers in detail, we are looking for textual patterns that are shared across a number of texts. In this way, we can discover the general qualities of motherhood and take account of the social spaces in which mothers operate. To be able to take such a distanced view, we have used methods from corpus linguistics […]. Through the focus on language and general patterns of how qualities of motherhood are represented, our findings contribute to revealing implicit ideologies in children's literature.
>
> *(Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021: 120)*

To account for the various ways in which mothers may be evoked linguistically in the corpus, the study begins by identifying a large set of general (i.e. not character-specific) 'people nouns' that occur at least 30 times in the corpus and are used by at least two different authors. A total of 395 people nouns are found to meet these criteria, and they are subsequently categorised into five meaning groups 'in such a way that we have a useful starting point to describe the contexts in which mothers operate' (Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021: 129):

1 General people nouns (e.g., 'man', 'children', 'people')
2 Family nouns (e.g., 'mother', 'sister', 'father')
3 Social nouns (e.g., 'Mr', 'Miss', 'friend')
4 Occupation nouns (e.g., 'nurse', 'soldiers', 'doctor')
5 Other nouns (e.g., 'fairy', 'goblin', 'hero')

Through concordance analysis, the study identifies specific patterns in how mothers are linguistically framed and reveals how these framings differ from those relating to fathers. For example, 'mother' is preceded by indefinite articles (e.g. the determiner 'a') more often than 'father', e.g. 'like a mother'.

Furthermore, a pattern emerges relating to the use of 'a mother' and 'a father' with the possessive clitic "s', i.e. 'a mother's' and 'a father's'. Figure 6.4 shows a sample of the concordance lines for the node 'a mother's' in the ChiLit Corpus. Notice the repeated co-occurrences with 'feelings' and 'love' as well as individual co-occurrences with the nouns 'duty', 'heart', and 'kiss'. Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021) find that, in comparison to 'a father's', the use of 'a mother's' places stronger emphasis on 'a general or abstract quality of motherhood'

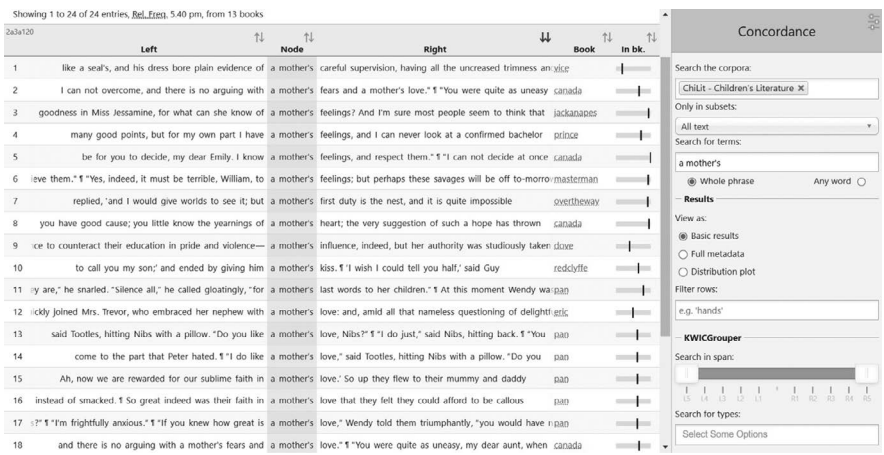
Showing 1 to 24 of 24 entries, Rel. Freq. 5.40 pm, from 13 books
Left
Node
Right
Book
In bk.
1 like a seal's, and his dress bore plain evidence of a mother's careful supervision, having all the uncreased trimness an vice
2 I can not overcome, and there is no arguing with a mother's fears and a mother's love." ¶ "You were quite as uneasy canada
3 goodness in Miss Jessamine, for what can she know of a mother's feelings? And I'm sure most people seem to think that jackanapes
4 many good points, but for my own part I have a mother's feelings, and I can never look at a confirmed bachelor prince
5 be for you to decide, my dear Emily. I know a mother's feelings, and respect them." ¶ "I can not decide at once canada
6 eve them." ¶ "Yes, indeed, it must be terrible, William, to a mother's feelings; but perhaps these savages will be off to-morro masterman
7 replied, 'and I would give worlds to see it; but a mother's first duty is the nest, and it is quite impossible overtheway
8 you have good cause; you little know the yearnings of a mother's heart; the very suggestion of such a hope has thrown canada
9 ce to counteract their education in pride and violence— a mother's influence, indeed, but her authority was studiously taken dove
10 to call you my son;' and ended by giving him a mother's kiss. ¶ 'I wish I could tell you half,' said Guy redclyffe
11 y are," he snarled. "Silence all," he called gloatingly, "for a mother's last words to her children." ¶ At this moment Wendy wa pan
12 ickly joined Mrs. Trevor, who embraced her nephew with a mother's love: and, amid all that nameless questioning of delight eric
13 said Tootles, hitting Nibs with a pillow. "Do you like a mother's love, Nibs?" ¶ "I do just," said Nibs, hitting back. ¶ "You pan
14 come to the part that Peter hated. ¶ "I do like a mother's love," said Tootles, hitting Nibs with a pillow. "Do you pan
15 Ah, now we are rewarded for our sublime faith in a mother's love.' So up they flew to their mummy and daddy pan
16 instead of smacked. ¶ So great indeed was their faith in a mother's love that they felt they could afford to be callous pan
17 ?" ¶ "I'm frightfully anxious." ¶ "If you knew how great is a mother's love," Wendy told them triumphantly, "you would have pan
18 and there is no arguing with a mother's fears and a mother's love." ¶ "You were quite as uneasy, my dear aunt, when canada
Concordance
Search the corpora:
ChiLit - Children's Literature
Only in subsets:
All text
Search for terms:
a mother's
Whole phrase
Any word
Results
View as:
Basic results
Full metadata
Distribution plot
Filter rows:
e.g. 'hands'
KWICGrouper
Search in span:
Search for types:
Select Some Options

FIGURE 6.4 Sample of concordance lines for 'a mother's' in the ChiLit Corpus

Source: Reproduced in *CLiC* following Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021: 139).

(Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021: 137) relating to emotional caregiving and moral guardianship.

Another pattern relating to possessive 'mother's' is observed via a significant co-occurrence relationship between 'mother' and 'arms'. Although distinct from abstract nouns (relating to the emotional labour of parenthood), the concrete noun 'arms' is used as a physical representation of a parent's love (e.g. 'For the baby's world was his mother's arms'). While this is also observed in the collocation between 'father' and 'arms', the association between 'mother' and 'arms' is found to be stronger than the relationship between 'father' and 'arms' (Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021: 140). This provides further evidence that 'mothers' are more often than 'fathers' framed implicitly as being emotionally involved in the caregiving of their children.

A key contribution of this study is that it demonstrates how corpus stylistics can be used to uncover ideological patterns in literary texts, in this case by observing empirical evidence of how children's literature encodes and perpetuates social norms, given the argument that children's literature plays an influential role in shaping young readers' understanding of such norms, including those relating to gender. Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021) conclude by reflecting on the contribution that their approach makes to the study of children's literature.

> Like other quantitative studies, ours provides textual evidence for a general gender imbalance in fiction. Unlike other studies, however, we focus on a particular type of character in fiction for children. Mothers are the most frequently occurring female character in our corpus of children's literature. By taking a corpus approach to identify patterns of the discursive representation of mothers, we make an important contribution to research into children's fiction. While ideals and ideologies are viewed as crucial elements of fiction for children, so far scholarship on children's literature has largely approached them through careful reading. We have shown how the understanding of norms and shared meanings in corpus linguistic terms opens up connections to concerns in criticism on children's literature. The tools we used are not limited to our interest in mothers but can be applied to other areas of fiction for children, too. Our approach points the way for a fresh view on familiar topics.
>
> *(Čermáková and Mahlberg 2021: 143–144)*

We chose this paper as our second case study because it provides a clearly described and accessible demonstration of the use of *CLiC* in corpus stylistics research. Furthermore, in comparison to Giovanelli (2022), which makes use of a relatively small corpus, Čermáková and Mahlberg (2021) demonstrate the value of corpus stylistics in approaching a larger (multi-million word) corpus of literary texts.

6.3.3 Non-literary corpus stylistics

The previous case studies have offered two examples of how corpus methods can be used – directly and indirectly – to aid the stylistic analysis of literary texts. In our final case study, we turn to a very different context that reflects a contemporary application of research in stylistics, namely the empirical investigation of how readers respond to texts or more broadly discuss their reading habits. In *Reading Habits in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Boucher et al. (2024) investigate how reading practices were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic during the first UK 'lockdown', in which public activities were heavily restricted to reduce the spread of the virus. The authors present the findings of an online survey, conducted in the summer of 2020, which asked over 800 participants to share how their reading practices were affected by – and perhaps played a role in – their experience of lockdown.

Much of the survey data arose from closed questions. For example, over 60% of participants reported having avoided particular genres (especially horror and post-apocalyptic fiction) since the start of the lockdown (Boucher et al. 2024: 30). In addition, the survey generated over 85,000 words worth of responses to open questions, which asked participants to provide reasons for their responses to the closed questions. Our case study focusses on Boucher et al.'s use of corpus linguistics – specifically keyness analysis (Section 6.2.2) – to explore the responses to the open questions, which were encoded with XML (Section 6.2.3) to support analysis using *Sketch Engine*. The following is a single survey question response marked up with XML to encode the question ID (*q_id*), question type (*q_type*), and question prompt (*q_prompt*):

> **<response q_id='23' q_type='open' q_prompt='23. If you have been avoiding particular genres during the lockdown period, why do you think this is the case? Please give details.'>**I think that fairy tales are great, but they are a little bit to unrealistic in their approach - at least that's how I feel now. They tell you that magic and tests will make the protagonists more humble and loving, but you don't see the same thing in reality, now, when a lot of things have happened and everybody is still pretty much angry and violent against each other. Fairy tales should be, in a proportion, a replica or a mirroring of reality and shouldn't be necessarily escapist literature, but at the same time, they give you a morale which is not applicable for the current situation. I cannot identify with it because the outside world is making me feel anxious and afraid for the future. **</response>**

In the chapter 'Reading as a Coping Strategy', which discusses how participants articulated the emotional and psychological functions of reading in a time of crisis, Boucher et al. (2024) use *Sketch Engine* to generate the top 100 key words in a corpus comprising all responses to the open questions, as compared to enTenTen21, a very large (52 billion words) general corpus of contemporary English gathered from

TABLE 6.3 Top 10 key words in the responses to open survey questions

Rank	*Key word*	*Frequency*		*Relative frequency (per million words)*	
		Target corpus	*Ref. corpus*	*Target corpus*	*Ref. corpus*
1	*goodreads*	239	36,266	2,757	1
2	*re-read*	226	89,188	2,607	1
3	*reread*	136	75,149	1,569	1
4	*escapism*	84	30,898	969	1
5	*re-reading*	93	42,177	1,073	1
6	*rereading*	64	32,914	738	1
7	*lockdown*	394	666,783	4,544	11
8	*audiobooks*	58	45,871	669	1
9	*post-apocalyptic*	43	52,573	496	1
10	*whatsapp*	106	229,895	1,223	4

Source: Adapted from Boucher et al. (2024: 141).

a variety of webpages. They argue that such a large and general reference corpus is suitable because contains 'samples of language about a broad range of topics, thus allowing us to identify the most distinctive words in our data' (Boucher et al. 2024: 68).

Table 6.3 shows the top ten key words, which are the words with 'the biggest difference in relative frequency in favour of the target corpus, and therefore the words which are most distinctive in their rate of usage in our data' (Boucher et al. 2024: 68). Among other findings, Boucher et al. notice the high ranking of the noun *escapism*, which is accompanied by the adjective 'escapist' at rank 17. However, merely noting that these words are used by the survey participants more regularly than usual clearly provides very little insight into the experiences and perceptions of the participants, so Boucher et al. dig into the collocates and concordance lines to explore the metaphorical framing of reading as a means of escape.

What are readers escaping from, and where are they escaping to? In other words, what are the *sources* and *goals* of the *material process* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014) of escaping? In most cases, participants specify neither a source nor a goal, for example by using *escape* as an intransitive verb (e.g. 'Prefer to read alternative world fiction to escape'). However, 'the examples that do provide elaboration offer a clear indication of the therapeutic role of reading' (Boucher et al. 2024: 78); this is supported by evidence from collocates:

> Sources of ESCAPE: *reality, situation, today, events, news, current affairs, real life, world, misery, anxiety, stress, thought, lockdown*
>
> Goals of ESCAPE: *world, safe place, setting, experiences, earlier period in history, book*
>
> *(Boucher et al. 2024: 75)*

The collocates point toward participants' framing of reading as a form of *transportation*, wherein 'a narrative serves to transport an experiencer from the here and now' (Gerrig 1993: 3) before they return to the 'world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey' (Gerrig 1993: 11). Transportation enables readers to 'temporarily disconnect from distressing thoughts and immerse themselves in a narrative that captures their attention' (Boucher et al. 2024: 66).

The evidence retrieved from the corpus allows Boucher et al. (2024) to make thematic connections across the responses of hundreds of survey participants while verifying observations made using other approaches. By foregrounding the participants' salient framings of reading experiences, the case study demonstrates how distinctive linguistic items – as identified using keyness analysis – can provide an empirical perspective on literary engagement during times of crisis. Corpus stylistics is thus not only of use in literary analysis but also in engaging with textual evidence of readers' interpretative processes, which can be accessed using the same techniques.

6.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have demonstrated that corpus linguistics and stylistics have much to offer one another based on the fact that, despite appearances, they actually have a lot in common. In the literary context, stylistic analysis is 'text-driven in that (bottom-up) patterns in the text function as cues for the (top-down) activation of schematic knowledge' (Mahlberg et al. 2016: 436). This 'text-drivenness', as Mahlberg et al. (2016: 436) put it, can be put to use both directly and indirectly in the service of literary analysis, as well as in other types of stylistic research, by both allowing you to see high-level patterns as well as supporting qualitative analysis. Indeed, corpus methods can be used in all of the areas of stylistics introduced in this book, be it narratological stylistics, cognitive stylistics, media stylistics, or educational stylistics.

Nonetheless, the computational and quantitative elements of corpus linguistics, not to mention the 'distant' nature of some of its analytical techniques, can seem unusual at first, and understandably off-putting for some. So, if you're approaching the 'corpus' part of 'corpus stylistics' for the first time, we hope that this chapter encourages you to embrace what may feel unfamiliar at first and consider the potential benefits. As we have shown, corpus stylistics need not (only) play a role in analysing primary data as the object of study, meaning that the approaches we have outlined in this chapter can be practised on existing corpora, eschewing a strict need to worry about the practicalities of building a corpus prior to getting stuck in with analysis. In that sense, we encourage you to learn more by exploring some corpus data, using the ideas we have offered in this chapter as a starting point, and seeing for yourself what might be of use to you in your own research, by considering how corpus methods may be able to contribute to any of the other areas of stylistics introduced in this book.

6.5 Further reading

McIntyre and Walker (2019) offers what we consider the most comprehensive and practical introduction to corpus stylistics to-date. Other excellent books include Mahlberg (2012), which focusses on literary applications, and Semino and Short (2004), which considers narrative texts from both fiction and non-fiction genres. For advanced reading, we recommend Louw and Milojkovic (2016) on theories of collocation and semantic prosody, Studer (2012) on the historical development of style in news discourse, and McEnery and Brezina (2022) on the theoretical principles underpinning corpus linguistics (not specific to stylistics). While there is not, to the best of our knowledge, a journal dedicated exclusively to research in corpus stylistics, you will find plenty of relevant studies in journals such as *Language and Literature*, *Style*, *Corpora*, and the *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, among many others.

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7

EDUCATIONAL STYLISTICS

In this chapter, we will consider

- **how stylistics and a range of educational contexts might be connected;**
- **distinctions between pedagogical stylistics, the pedagogy of stylistics, and stylistics in educational policy research;**
- **approaches to and applications of educational stylistics.**

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on educational stylistics, which we propose as a broad and useful term for an interdisciplinary field that encompasses research in stylistics and education in a wide range of contexts. McIntyre (2011, 2012) has drawn a distinction between pedagogical stylistics and the pedagogy *of* stylistics, summarising that pedagogical stylistics 'refers to the application of stylistics techniques in teaching' (2012: 114). This aligns with Carter's (2010: 68) description of the aim of pedagogical stylistics to provide 'a systematic set of analytical tools, drawn from linguistics, that can foster insights into the patterning of literary texts in ways which allow those insights to be open, evidenced, and retrievable'. McIntyre suggests, meanwhile, that the pedagogy of stylistics 'may be conceptualised as research which identifies and explores effective ways of teaching stylistics, or 'the study of how best to teach stylistics in particular' (McIntyre 2012: 114); for example, an approach focusing on the pedagogy of stylistics might involve a critical reflection or exploration on how to choose the appropriate stylistic approach for a specific context. Educational stylistics, then, includes research relating to both pedagogical stylistics and the pedagogy of stylistics. However, we also suggest that it is even more widely applicable than implied by the aforementioned terms and extends beyond their boundaries, encompassing further research contexts in

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which stylistics and education intersect – for example, where stylistics is employed as a productive tool for analysis in education research, as we will discuss in this chapter. In defining and exploring educational stylistics in this chapter, we aim to reflect the broad application of contemporary stylistics in a wide range of educational contexts.

Connections to education are embedded in stylistics. Consideration of the pedagogical applications of stylistics was, as Burke (2010: 8) reminds us, fundamental to the emergence of modern stylistics, particularly in relation to the research of members of the Poetics and Linguistics Association (PALA) in the 1980s, and especially in the work of Ron Carter (see Carter and Long 1987; Carter et al. 1989) and Mick Short (1989, 1996) in pedagogical stylistics. Pedagogical stylistics first developed as a 'student-centred, activity based and process-oriented' (Carter 1996: 3) approach to teaching English language and literature, with the key aim being 'to sensitize students to language use within the texts chosen for study' (Clark and Zyngier 2003: 341). Stylistics and pedagogy, according to Hall (2023: 264), are 'effectively inseparable', existing in a 'symbiotic relationship [which is] as strong and healthy today as it has ever been'.

Accordingly, in the tradition of Carter and Short, subsequent significant contributions in stylistics have often emphasised its practical applications and aimed to provide resources for students and researchers, while also providing comprehensive introductions to the field, meaning that theory and pedagogical applications are inherently interwoven. Examples include Stockwell's (2002) *Cognitive Poetics*, Gavins and Steen's (2003) *Cognitive Poetics in Practice*, Simpson's (2014) *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*, and Jeffries and McIntyre's (2010) *Stylistics*, to name but a few. An enduring concern for pedagogy and for the practical applications of stylistics is evident in the continued focus of publications on how to 'do' stylistics. Recent examples include Mason and Giovanelli's (2021) *Studying Fiction*, and Giovanelli and Harrison's (2024) *Cognitive Grammar in Stylistics: A Practical Guide*. Perhaps the interrelated nature of stylistics and pedagogy also reflects the way that stylistics in the classroom operates similarly to stylistics in general, since stylistics is fundamentally *applied* in nature. Both stylistics in general and stylistics in the classroom depend on what Bex (1999: 2) describes as three key choices relating to selection of text, selection of the most appropriate linguistic, literary or theoretical approach or method, and application of the chosen approach to the chosen text.

Educational stylistics encompasses stylistic research located in a plethora of educational contexts and settings. These include its applications in higher education, in which pedagogical stylistics originated, and in which it is still primarily located. The diverse educational stylistics studies in this context are innumerable, but some examples include Sotirova's (2016) research reflecting on the affordances of teaching students about empirical stylistics, Lambrou's (2020) analysis of the benefits of flipped classroom approaches to teaching stylistics and fostering an investigative approach, and Gordon's (2022) pedagogical stylistics of intertextuality

in interactive classroom talk. Stylistics has also made important contributions in L2 and EFL research (see, for example, Carter and McRae 1996; Burke et al. 2012; Fogal 2015; Viana and Zyngier 2017; Zyngier and Fialho 2010). Research in these areas tends to focus on how aspects of stylistics can support language acquisition for L2 learners. For instance, Burke (2015) has shown how the analysis of conceptual metaphors helps aid depth of understanding for L2 learners. Tools from stylistics are also increasingly applied in other pedagogical settings, such as in Jackson's (2020) Text World Theory analysis of preschool parent-child reading-aloud discourse.

One of the most significant educational contexts in which stylistics has been applied, however, is secondary English education. Stylisticians have long advocated for the place of stylistics in English education at all levels: see, for instance, Short's (1989; 1996) and Simpson's (1996) contributions, which Carter (2007: 9) defines, among others, as 'classroom-ready textbooks' which have 'exerted real influence in schools, where a new generation of teachers of English have embraced the possibilities offered'. As the discipline of stylistics has matured, stylisticians have increasingly explored and explained the opportunities that specific methods and concepts from stylistics might offer both teachers and students in a wide range of pedagogical contexts; see, for example, Giovanelli's (2016; 2017) analyses of the affordances of Text World Theory in the secondary English classroom, Macrae's (2016) summary of useful stylistic procedures for teaching English, and Mansworth's (2020) exploration of teaching poetry using stylistic frameworks. Such research, alongside – as Cushing (2018) explains – an increasingly literary linguistic focus in A-Level specifications, has helped to increase interest in stylistics at the secondary level. Cushing (2018) has suggested the need for further research to evaluate the impact of the application of such stylistic methodologies in education, attempting to address this by investigating the implementation of a stylistics course for teachers and providing suggestions for training teachers to integrate stylistics into school curricula. Later in this chapter, we also explore Cushing's (2019) involvement of secondary school teachers in the design of a scheme of work informed by cognitive stylistics.

Beyond these explicitly pedagogical applications of stylistics at the secondary level, stylistics has also been productively used as a tool to analyse educational policy (see Cushing 2021; Farquhar and Fitzsimons 2016; Goatly 2002 for a few examples). This research has worked to demonstrate the utility of stylistics in casting light on ideologies underlying educational policy documents. In Cushing's (2021) analysis of language ideologies in England's education policy, for instance, he uses methods from stylistics alongside critical discourse analysis to analyse how ideologies of Standard English are enforced in curriculum documents, assessment materials and teacher guidance documents. The use of stylistics in educational policy analysis is an exciting and developing area of research, as will be demonstrated in Section 7.3.3.

Overall, then, educational stylistics includes research spanning pedagogical stylistics, the pedagogy of stylistics, and interdisciplinary and intersecting research in

stylistics and education more broadly. It encompasses research located conceptually and physically across a range of settings including in higher education, preschool, primary and secondary English education, L2 education, and in educational policy analysis. The myriad intersections between stylistics and education render educational stylistics a truly exciting area of study with innumerable potential applications. However, such breadth can also mean it may be difficult to know just where to begin when undertaking research in educational stylistics. In the next section of this chapter, therefore, we outline some preliminary considerations to assist with the process of planning research in educational stylistics.

7.2 Considerations

This section will provide some considerations in preparation for designing research studies in educational stylistics in terms of what to consider in forming the focus of your study and the selection of your data.

7.2.1 Focus

The field of education is one with which any researcher is, to some extent, familiar. Whether focusing on the primary, secondary or tertiary level, we are acquainted with the structures, systems, and practices which take place in the educational context as we have experienced these as former students or practitioners. It is important to acknowledge these personal experiences and to critically reflect on the influence of positionality (Davies and Harrè 1990). Reflecting on your own prior experiences in education may also be a useful way into choosing an area of focus for your research. An initial question you might think about at the start of a research study is where your interest lies: is there a particular topic you want to examine further; do you have a concern about a specific issue; or is there a pedagogical tool you want to trial in the classroom context? This will enable you to crystallise the area of research in which you wish to focus your attention and to develop research questions worthy of exploration.

Your interest may also have developed from your previous learning experiences and these experiences may have informed your perceptions of education or what happens in the classroom or school context. For instance, one of our case studies (Ahmed 2019) stemmed from the tension the researcher recognised in teaching English through a Eurocentric lens as a British Pakistani, female, Muslim former secondary English teacher. Your role as researcher and your ways of seeing, hearing, and responding to what you encounter will inevitably be influenced by lived experiences, which in turn need to be acknowledged when considering your approach towards a research study.

A core aspect of planning any research study is, of course, carefully considering how you intend to approach data generation (see Chapter 2). As with any study, it is vital to ensure your data generation methods will help you to achieve

your research aims and answer your research questions. Careful reflection on your own aims will then help you to decide on your methodology and methods. For instance, will lesson observations help you to address your chosen research question? Or will focus group interviews be the most appropriate methodological approach, and if so, who will be your participants: teachers or students? Is your research question best answered by engaging in critical reflection and analysis of educational policy? Or is action research, for instance by trialling pedagogical approaches *yourself*, the best method? These questions can only be answered by you in response to your research questions, as you will be keenly aware of your own aims, but it is essential to deeply reflect on the potential affordances or limitations of each approach before making a decision. Of course, reflecting on the approaches taken by other researchers may help you to make this decision.

If your research involves engaging with research participants, it is also worth reflecting on the ways in which the research project might be framed as a potential *collaboration* in which participants are involved in the research. In doing so, the focus of the research can become a co-constructed activity; participants, if engaged with the process of design or post hoc discussions, may be able to provide reflective and evaluative commentary which you can then use to hone the direction of your research.

Finally, as in any study, it is crucial to reflect on research ethics (again, see Chapter 2), but if your research involves direct contact with students or school pupils it is even more important to critically reflect on your ethical responsibilities and to follow ethical guidelines. For instance, if children are involved in your research, you will need to complete safeguarding processes, obtain signed consent from parents and students alike, and provide participant information sheets which outline the research aims, objectives, and design in a clear and accessible manner.

7.2.2 Selection of data

As outlined in Section 7.1, the field of educational stylistics may be conceptualised as encompassing pedagogical stylistics, the pedagogy *of* stylistics, and policy analysis. However, it is important to note that each of these areas of study may also overlap and intersect. Educational stylistics can facilitate connections between policy, practice, and classroom, enabling us to understand the dynamic nature of how English as a subject is framed. Bernstein's (2003) theory of 'pedagogic discourse' provides a useful framework for considering how the English subject actually taught in primary and secondary classrooms is shaped and influenced by governmental decisions made at a national level, and the beliefs and practices of academics working in higher education, according to the principle of recontextualisation. Accordingly, there are several potential sources of data

you can draw on and several research contexts in which educational stylistics can be located, for example:

- policy (e.g. using analytical tools from linguistics to analyse reports or policy documents; curriculum framework)
- pedagogical materials (e.g. [co-]designing of CPD sessions or teaching materials; analysis of literary and non-literary texts; textbooks)
- classroom pedagogy and practice (e.g. observations of grammar, stylistics, or literary teaching; lesson observations; focus groups, interviews with teachers and students; surveys; pilot lessons trialling new pedagogical approaches; students' work)

Methodologically, you could choose to integrate tools from applied linguistics in order to ground the stylistic analysis into your selected educational context. For instance, an examination of government policy on the teaching of grammar might be complemented by classroom observations, lesson plans, teacher interviews, or surveys. It is worth noting here that although the case studies (Section 7.3) are situated in the context of school subject English, there is also emerging research which applies stylistic methodologies to other disciplines, such as science (Zacharias 2018), music (Barrett and Stauffer 2019), and personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education (Miller 2024). The case studies examined in this chapter can also be considered as interdisciplinary in terms of the methodological approaches they apply. From examining the implementation of stylistics in the secondary school classroom (see Section 7.3.2), to appreciating the power metaphors can have in shaping conceptualisations of abstract ideas such as academic disciplines (see Section 7.3.3), recent research in pedagogical contexts using stylistic methodologies illustrates some of the productive ways in which stylistics and education can intersect.

7.3 Selected case studies

We now explore some examples of educational stylistics by focusing on four selected case studies. The first of these, Simpson (1996) demonstrates the value of pedagogical stylistics in raising students' appreciation of literature. The remaining cases studies focus, in different ways, on stylistics research within the context of school subject English as it is taught at secondary level in the United Kingdom: Case studies two and three (Ahmed 2019 and Cushing 2019), draw on cognitive stylistic principles to examine classroom discourse and the teaching of poetry; and case study four outlines Caroline Godfrey's (Godfrey 2026) work on the metaphors employed in a series of Ofsted publications about school subject English, demonstrating how stylistics can be utilised as a tool for educational policy analysis. While reading the case studies, you may like to think about which research approaches described below particularly resonate with your own interests.

7.3.1 Using pedagogical stylistics to teach cohesion and narrative style

Paul Simpson's (1996: 101–127) exploration of teaching narrative style and cohesion in the undergraduate stylistics classroom provides a fascinating insight into the affordances of pedagogical stylistics for students of language and literature. In keeping with the contributions of this book as a whole, Simpson's chapter aptly demonstrates how exploration of literary texts can sensitise students to language use and facilitate linguistic understanding, while also illustrating the value of linguistics for literary study. In the tradition of research in pedagogical stylistics, Simpson's exploration of teaching narrative employs structured reflection on his application of methods and concepts from stylistics in the classroom, focusing on a key language framework – in this case, cohesion – and outlining pedagogical strategies and their impact on students.

Pedagogical stylistics can either involve teaching students about a language framework before introducing them to a text or can instead begin with the text itself before subsequently introducing students to a linguistic feature for analysis. In this case, Simpson takes the latter approach, and interestingly, it is a method that he not only applies to his teaching but also uses to construct the chapter itself, meaning that the reader is invited to undertake the same process experienced by the students. The pedagogical approach discussed in the chapter involves assigning students a dismantled vignette from Hemingway's *In Our Time* collection of short stories, with the sentences jumbled in a random order, and asking them to rearrange these sentences into a coherent narrative sequence, while also encouraging students to explain and justify their choices with references to the language of the text.

In the next stage of the process, Simpson outlines how he asks students to explore similarities and differences in the ordering of the sentences, and to reflect on the features of cohesion guiding their choices, thus helping them to develop their understanding of a range of types of cohesion, drawing in particular on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) work. In his discussion of students' responses, Simpson notes that students frequently agreed on the order of certain sentences due to their interpretations of particular cohesive patterns, despite their versions tending to differ from the original story. Simultaneously, Simpson demonstrates that readers frequently infer causality in a narrative partly by drawing on contextual knowledge.

Subsequently, Simpson (1996: 110) describes his creation of a 'idealised narrative' based on the most frequently selected sentence order, before finally introducing students to the original Hemingway story. This enables students to reflect again on their own use of cohesion as compared to features in Hemingway's text, but also to formulate comparisons between their own and Hemingway's work, thereby developing their understanding of literariness. For example, students explored with Simpson the lack of connectivity in the Hemingway story, the use of repetition, anaphora and cataphora, antonymy, and cohesive chains, and therefore developed an understanding of Hemingway's sparse narrative style. Simpson (1996: 114) explains that this process therefore offers 'insight into what students of literature regard as

literary […] in terms of the kinds of structures which they expect literary texts to exhibit'. Simpson's multidimensional pedagogical approach also demonstrates the affordances of blending stylistics with narrative theory, as he additionally draws on Labov's (1972: 359–60) sociological framework of natural narrative to help students enrich their understanding of narrative structure and to illuminate how their own versions follow a more conventional narrative pattern than Hemingway's story.

The pedagogical method described by Simpson uses a staged approach, with several distinct phases working to progressively build students' linguistic awareness. The final stage in this process involves a creative re-writing activity where students compose their own stories after being introduced to the newspaper article upon which Hemingway's vignette was based. This enables students to examine how their own texts differ stylistically and narratively from Hemingway's, identifying – for example – how they tended to use modality more frequently and explicitly, and exploring how their writing differed in the extent to which they adhered to Labov's narrative structure in comparison to Hemingway. This, then, demonstrates to students some of the nuanced ways in which literature often challenges narrative and linguistic conventions.

Fundamentally, Simpson's chapter demonstrates how pedagogical stylistics can help students to develop their appreciation of narrative style by enriching their understanding of how language functions in literary texts. Furthermore, Simpson's reflection on the impact of his own pedagogy exemplifies the value of creative and interactive approaches to teaching stylistics in the higher education classroom. On a practical level, the chapter provides a valuable model for the design of teaching activities – and, accordingly, by extending the invitation to readers to participate in the same learning process as his students, Simpson offers an example of how to write about pedagogical stylistics in an effective and useful way by enabling readers to personally experience the pedagogical process described in the chapter. Finally, by discussing the implications of the pedagogical activities he designs in his own classroom with reference to the verbal contributions and creative output of his students, Simpson provides meaningful empirical data based on structured reflection on pedagogical practice.

7.3.2 Cognitive educational stylistics and the secondary English classroom

Our next case study brings together two pieces of work that draw on cognitive stylistics (see Chapter 4) in the secondary classroom. The first is Furzeen Ahmed's (2019) exploration of the role of classroom talk, which uses Text World Theory (Gavins 2007; Werth 1999) to examine students' construction of their cultural identities in a secondary English literature classroom, outlining how students use collaborative world-building, a common feature in educational spaces, by trialling new, alternative or conflicting discourse-world knowledge (see Chapter 4 for discussion on Text World Theory).

Ahmed's study is centred on how Text World Theory offers a way of tracing students' discourse processing, within different contexts. In the classroom, where students are engaged in both constructing identities and discussing lesson content, students' voices contend with external pressures such as teacher-led interpretations which, although unintentional, pre-figure their reading experiences (see Giovanelli and Mason 2015, for further discussion on manufactured versus authentic readings). Students' own responses to and discussion of literary texts may be in tension with the privileged status afforded to literary texts (Ahmed 2018; 2024; Shah 2013); and students' bodies may be scrutinised through policies dictating the manner in which they perform in the educational space (see Cushing 2021, for instance, for further discussion on the conceptualisation of embodied language policing in the school context). Ahmed outlines how the applications of Text World Theory in studies such as Giovanelli and Mason (2015) and Cushing et al. (2021) has been previously conducted at an analytical level but that there has been limited text-worlds research which examines the impact that the classroom setting has on discourse (although see Giovanelli 2019 for one example). In the educational space, students bring multiple experiences, socio-cultural knowledge, and power dynamics which shape their understanding of the world.

In her study, Ahmed utilises Text World Theory as a socio-cognitive analytical framework to examine how students negotiate as well as manage differences in reading experiences within a contested site, such as the classroom space (Fairclough 1995). She examines a student's response (student Y in the transcript extract below) in terms of how he manages new knowledge introduced by a fellow student (student B in the transcript below), in evolving an understanding of the text. Her study illustrates how agency can be reclaimed by students in centring their interpretations through affiliation formed between cultural discourse-world knowledge and text worlds. It is therefore an illustration of how significant it is to re-frame the notion of conflict or tension (Quarshie 2007) expressed by students in the classroom as a positive element of the learning process, rather than an obstacle.

Ahmed looks at a small focus group discussion on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (Dickens 1994), the novella being studied as part of a class's GCSE English Literature course. In this extract, the students are discussing their evolving understanding of the ghosts' role by applying their own notion of 'jinns', a concept introduced by student B as ghost-like entities that are classed as either good or evil in Islam and are believed to reside in derelict areas away from humans.

1 Y: [you know when you know when] the Ghost of Christmas Present =
2 F: = yeah =
3 Y: = sprinkles his magic water over people
4 [everyone laughs]
5 …
6 Y: [he sprinkles his magic water over people and that is =
7 …

8 Y: = he's controlling the people that's simil[ar to]
9 B: [yeah]
10 [everyone laughs]
11 B: he's
12 [everyone laughs]
13 …
14 Y: so he sprinkles his magic water [inaudible] and [people are happy] and people are happy right so =
15 …
16 F: = yes [it's]
17 Y: [the] reli- the religion behind it i[s (.)] uh obviously in Islam [you h]
18 F: [yes] [yeah]
19 Y: = the good people controlling your behaviour the bad people so (.) the ghost of Christmas present represent[s]
20 …
21 Y: = so it would link to Islam Islam believes in these jinns and what[ever =]
22 …
23 B: = jinns whatever they're serious you know [in humorous tone] they come and haunt you in the night =
24 Y: = okay I'm sorry but oka[y okay okay] and and they control your behaviour right if you are good [or you] do =

Ahmed demonstrates how collaborative thinking and conversing may be understood by analysing the various modal worlds and world-switches as students discuss the concept of jinns. For example, Ahmed outlines how Y describes a specific scene where the ghost 'sprinkle[s]' incense over the impoverished people he sees along with Scrooge on their journey (Dickens 1994: 42). Here, the verb 'sprinkled' is repeated and foregrounded by Y in his reference to the scene, shifting the focus onto the text-world triggered by the term. Y's direct quotation from the text in the form of the verb describes the ghost's actions as part of a sequence of actions as the ghost initiates a transformation in the people's behaviour. Here, Y suggests that this physical action in turn signals a psychological domination of the people when he says 'he's controlling people that's similar to'. The present progressive verb in '[i]s controlling' depicts the ghost's action as taking effect on the people as part of the text-world's 'here and now'. Here, the verb provides an insight into the ghost's domineering position in the scene, as Y begins to grapple with his understanding of the ghost's role in this extract in relation to the notion of jinns. It is not only the idea of jinns that Y alludes to in his reference to the Ghost of Christmas Present (the kinder, friendlier ghost depicted in the novella), but also the qualities associated with jinns, which the group found to be the most interesting element of the novel concept. B's initial explanation that jinns possess both good and bad qualities is foregrounded by Y when he states that ghosts control people's behaviour if they are good.

In this study, Ahmed outlines how the students 'toggle' between the text-world and discourse-world to attempt to negotiate the affiliation being formed between B's cultural discourse-world knowledge, and the text world. The reclaiming of student-led interpretations is actualised in student Y's trialling of B's introduced concept, where he forms the connections foregrounded by a characteristic of the jinns – the supernatural form can control your behaviour in both bad and good ways. In line 24, Y's use of the conditional can be understood as adding a layer of remoteness or distance represented by 'if'. Y's reference to the verb 'sprinkled' (Dickens 1994: 42) in line 3 forms the second layer of the text-world, which refers to the specific scenario regarding the Ghost of Christmas Present. However, the third layer refers not only to the conditional clause uttered by Y, but it also refers to the immediate situation present in relation to B's cultural discourse-world knowledge. Whereas Y's attempt to grasp this new and complex idea of jinns demonstrates his efforts in navigating their interpretations and using the incremented information to his own accord, there is a shift in power dynamics.

Ahmed's text world analysis highlights how B is drafted into the conversation through Y's use of the discourse marker and conditional in 'right if you are good (or you) do', triggering the epistemic modal world, where it seems Y is searching for clarification for his interpretation. 'If' sets up the *protasis*, which is the conditional construction or a hypothetical situation remote from the real world and may take the form of an if-clause (Gavins 2007: 131–134). In turn, the protasis sets up the consequence of the conditional, which is called the *apodosis* (Gavins 2007: 131–134). In this scenario, the conditional and the main clause express the future action following the propositional form 'right'. Here, the outcome is that ghosts (or jinns) influence human behaviour ('if you are good (or you) do something bad').

Ahmed's detailed analysis highlights how Y's interpretation builds on the incremented information by perceiving the ghost's action through B's proposition. She demonstrates how, although Y's interpretation moves the interaction ahead in exemplifying the good and bad nature of ghosts in the novella, B's return to jinns prompts the discourse participants to track back to understand the proposed link. Y continues his contribution by aligning the text-world represented by the verb 'sprinkled', with B's reference to the distinct nature of jinns as 'they can be good ones bad ones'. The possibility indicated by B's use of the epistemic modal verb in 'they can be good' suggests that jinns can control human behaviour either way, potentially encouraging Y to propose his idea regarding the ghost's role in influencing 'the people'. Here, Ahmed analyses how Y's use of the definite article indicates a shift in power dynamics, from the ghost being initially considered as an ambiguous entity by Scrooge, to the ghost's action showing his sheer strength over a large number of individuals, using 'people' as a mass noun to depict this power. The epistemic modal world triggered by the modal verb in 'which would link to ghosts you' demonstrates Y's gradual confidence in applying the notion of jinns. However, Y requires clarification from B as to whether his understanding of her cultural discourse-world knowledge is on the right lines. Y reiterates the idea proposed by B regarding how this powerful entity, in the form of jinns or ghosts, is in contrast to the somewhat helpless nature of

humans. Both Y and B echo the notion of this sense of categorisation, with the text-world reflecting the former's understanding of this world, and how the incremented information has influenced this. Ahmed completes her analysis by exploring how Y's use of 'if' in line 24 features a discrepancy since most of the group are still indecisive as to whether the notion of jinns is true in the real world. In B's case, her belief means there is no question or doubt regarding the possibility of jinns or ghosts controlling human behaviour in the real world.

Overall, Ahmed outlines how Text World Theory might be used both to present the structure of classroom discourse but also to examine some of its nuances. In this instance, Ahmed's study clearly articulates how collaboration and conflict in classroom discourse, occurs. Her work outlines how Text World Theory may be valuable in providing a socio-cognitive analysis of discourse which traces the co-construction of reading, thoughts, voices, and emotion in student interactions. She also demonstrates how Text World Theory may also be useful in highlighting the complexity of interactions in educational spaces, showing how these are influenced by political, social and cultural contexts, which emerge through and as a result of the discourse.

The second study explores an example of pedagogical stylistics in the secondary school context, focusing on how concepts from stylistics can be productively applied in the classroom in order to enrich students' understanding of language and literature. Ian Cushing's (2019) 'A textured and sensory grammar for the experience of reading', is chosen as our focal example of pedagogical stylistics in the secondary setting. It should be noted, though, that alongside the practical application of stylistics demonstrated by this study (in the tradition of pedagogical stylistics), Cushing also critically reflects on pedagogy and makes strong recommendations for stylistics to be taught in particular ways in the classroom, meaning that his research is an excellent example of how pedagogical stylistics and the pedagogy *of* stylistics, as defined by McIntyre (2011, 2012), often inevitably intersect.

Cushing innovatively employs Stockwell's (2005; 2009; 2016) notion of *texture* to frame what he terms 'pedagogical cognitive stylistics' (Cushing 2019: 132). He then uses this concept to explores how cognitive stylistics can inform the teaching of literary language in secondary schools. Texture is the immersive experience of reading in which a reader's extratextual environment interacts with the language of the text causing them to experience real emotions. In Cushing's study, Stockwell's (2009: 20–30) checklist of *textual attractors* is introduced to teachers, and later students. As we outlined in Chapter 4, textual attractors are features likely to cause an attentional shift by attracting our focus as we read a text. We reprint Stockwell's taxonomy of attractors below.

- *Newness* (currency: the present moment of reading is more attractive than the previous moment)
- *Agency* (noun phrases in active position are better attractors than in passive position)
- *Topicality* (subject position confers attraction over object position)

- *Empathetic recognisability* (human speaker > human hearer > animal > object > abstraction)
- *Definiteness* (definite ('the man') > specific indefinite ('a certain man') > non-specific indefinite ('any man'))
- *Activeness* (verbs denoting action, violence, passion, wilfulness, motivation or strength)
- *Brightness* (lightness or vivid colours being denoted over dimness or drabness)
- *Fullness* (richness, density, intensity or nutrition being denoted)
- *Largeness* (large objects being denoted, or a very long elaborated noun phrase used to denote)
- *Height* (objects that are above others, are higher than the perceiver, or which dominate)
- *Noisiness* (denoted phenomena which are audibly voluminous)
- *Aesthetic distance from the norm* (beautiful or ugly referents, dangerous referents, alien objects denoted, dissonance)

(Stockwell 2009: 25)

Cushing (2019: 133) reminds us that these attractors are dynamic. Readers' attention is 'moved around either by being shifted – this involves distraction from one figural attractor to another – or zoomed – that is, focused inward with a greater granularity or intensity' (Stockwell 2009: 34). Accordingly, texts contain multiple attractors which help to produce immersive reading experiences.

One of the most important aspects of pedagogical stylistics is the selection of a particular stylistic framework or model for re-contextualisation to the classroom environment. Cushing (2019) selects and recontextualises the concept of texture – along with broader cognitive stylistic principles – into a pedagogy suitable for secondary English teaching for a number of important reasons. Firstly, Stockwell's model of texture recognises the role of the reader while still insisting that interpretations are grounded in the language of the text, thus adhering to the tradition in cognitive stylistics to sit at the intersection between reader-response theories (e.g. Rosenblatt 1978) and close textual analysis. More specifically, Cushing (2019: 134) argues that 'the model is based on what readers already know about the world, in terms of how they navigate and experience it using their five senses', therefore helping students to understand how writers present worlds in literary texts and to conceptualise 'the ways in which the texture of those worlds can feel real'.

Alongside the selection of the stylistic framework, other vital aspects of conducting research in pedagogical stylistics are choosing the context in which research takes place and deciding on the practical design of the study. Cushing's study focuses on two Year 8 secondary English classes in a North London school. A striking feature of the methodology is that, rather than imposing a pre-determined pedagogy on the teachers of these classes, he undertakes design-based research, or DBR (Barab 2014), facilitating a collaborative process in which the two English teachers involved in the study were trained in cognitive stylistics over an eighteen

month period, including on Stockwell's (2005; 2009; 2016) theory of texture, before collaborating on a six-week scheme of work, including fifteen lessons on 'The Rear-Guard' by Siegfried Sassoon (1918). While pedagogical stylistics may be applied in a single lesson or even a part of a lesson, by undertaking an extended eighteen-month project in which teachers were trained in stylistics and involved in curriculum design, Cushing was able to ensure that cognitive stylistic theory and teaching practice were completely integrated throughout the study, as the experiences of the participants were valued in helping to refine the pedagogical approach.

As in any empirical study, careful consideration of how data are generated and analysed is vital in pedagogical stylistics. In the case of this study, the two teachers delivered a set of lessons which were video-recorded and transcribed, before the data was thematically coded and analysed. Alongside classroom data, Cushing (2019: 135) also drew on field notes and teacher interviews to facilitate a 'discursive evaluation of the pedagogy, its principles and the way it was actualised in the classroom'. Importantly, then, not only were the teachers in this study involved in the pedagogical design and trained in cognitive stylistics, but their reflections on the learning were also used as a source of data, and their own pedagogical experiences valued, alongside the analysis of the researcher.

A further important element of this study is that, before being introduced to the textual attractor model, students were asked to discuss things that were foregrounded for them in their analysis, meaning that they were encouraged to develop their own interpretations before being directed to particular textual or stylistic features. This process is helpful in avoiding directing students towards particular 'manufactured readings' (Giovanelli and Mason 2015: 42) by emphasising certain textual elements before students have had the opportunity to form their own ideas. Interestingly, Cushing uses the concept of texture to help analyse how students naturally noticed the textual attractors within the poem, such as the soldier's actions (*activeness* in Stockwell's model) and the sounds of battle above the trench (*noisiness*) before being explicitly taught, meaning the concept of texture is used here to facilitate understanding of the students' learning. After students had the opportunity to develop their initial interpretations, teachers then introduced the textual attractor model as a specific tool that could be utilised by students to help them develop understanding of how language was combining with their own discourse-world knowledge in order to construct a reading experience. This research demonstrates, then, the pedagogical value of the concept of texture at multiple stages of the learning process, as well as the broader affordances of pedagogical stylistics for both teachers and students.

This study is also an excellent example of how work in pedagogical stylistics can have multiple intersecting implications for teaching. Cushing reflects on the usefulness of texture not only in enabling awareness of language generally, but also in facilitating the contextualised teaching of grammar by leading with responses and emotional experiences of reading rather than grammatical terminology. Some of the textual attractors outlined by Stockwell have, according to Cushing (2019:

139), 'grammatical correlates: agency, topicality, definiteness and activeness' while others have 'less clearly defined grammatical characteristics' but may nonetheless be partially communicated grammatically. In the lessons recorded and transcribed for this study, students were able to develop interpretations of grammatical features 'grounded in students' own sensory and spatial experiences of the actual world' (Cushing 2019: 140), with the model of texture helping to ensure that discourse about grammar was 'intertwined with discourse about the texture and experience of reading' (Cushing 2019: 140). A further incidental benefit of the cognitive stylistic framework introduced to students in this study was the facilitation of 'exploratory talk' (Mercer 2000: 98) among the students who reflected thoughtfully and critically on each other's analyses, while grounding their interpretations in textual detail and using metalanguage productively.

Overall, this study demonstrates how the application of cognitive stylistics in the secondary school English context has the potential to facilitate the integration of language and literature, thus enhancing students' interactions with literature and enriching their understanding of the powerful effects of language. This example of pedagogical stylistics illustrates, as Cushing (2019: 140) puts it, that 'if students are provided with the conceptual tools of cognitive stylistics, then this opens up the possibility of them thinking like a stylistician: paying equal attention to the linguistic patterns of texts and the felt experiences of reading, and using a metalanguage which is inherently descriptive'. The research also demonstrates the value of selecting one key concept, idea or method from stylistics and using this as the springboard for designing teaching activities, since the notion of texture helped both students and teachers to conceptualise the immersive feelings experienced when reading and to understand how these are created. More broadly, this research also exemplifies the value of involving teachers in the development and implementation of pedagogical stylistics in the school context. Furthermore, Cushing gives other researchers a useful example of the importance of critically reflecting on the practical challenges of implementing pedagogical stylistics. This case study clearly indicates that teacher training opportunities and curriculum changes incorporating cognitive stylistics in mainstream English education would be highly beneficial in order to help students develop contextualised grammatical awareness and to help enrich understanding of the connections between language, experience, and literature. However, Cushing acknowledges that implementing this in schools requires acute sensitivity to teachers' existing professional identities and the practical realities they face in their teaching contexts.

7.3.3 Metaphor in Ofsted's English subject reports (2005–2024)

The previous two case studies drew on the tools of stylistics to examine classroom discourse and explore the application of pedagogical stylistics in the secondary school English classroom. We now turn our attention to education policy documents, and the work of Caroline Godfrey (Godfrey 2026), in recognition of

Bernstein's (2003) claim that all school subjects are recontextualised for the classroom under the shaping influence of government pronouncements and the official texts within which these are contained. Godfrey focuses on publications issued by the UK's education inspectorate, Ofsted, specifically drawing on metaphor to shape her analysis.

Figurative language has long been part of the stylistician's toolbox and given the capacity of metaphor to shape receivers' ideological responses to a whole range of social issues, metaphorical language can provide an ideal focus for anyone researching policy documents (see Schön 1993 and Thibodeau and Boroditsky 2011 for further exemplification). The ideological shaping inherent in utilising metaphors is achieved by their capacity to foreground selective aspects of a target phenomenon. For example, an educational commentator using the metaphor EDUCATION IS PRODUCTION highlights the similarities between industrial processes and schools, the latter churning out students in place of products. However, in utilising this particular metaphor, the commentator simultaneously erodes the very human elements of reciprocity and sympathy that characterise the complex relationships between teachers, leaders, parents and advisors. It is clear therefore that all metaphors provide *interpretations* rather than objective *facts* about the world. Potential problems arise when we, as a society, are no longer aware of the process of selection and transfer involved in metaphor usage and simply assume the interpretations they promote to be part of our common-sense view of the world; in other words, metaphors can become 'naturalized' (Fairclough 1995: 35). Once this happens, genuine alternatives to the naturalized interpretation can be eliminated from our thoughts, without us even realising that this has happened.

There can be high stakes involved in studying metaphor, and this is certainly true as far as educational policy is concerned. Godfrey's study demonstrates how the dominant metaphors employed to represent school subject English in a series of Ofsted publications change and develop over time. When embarking on metaphor research, there can be many methodological challenges, a problem that has been exacerbated by researchers in this area being rather sporadic in the reporting of their methods (as highlighted by Todd and Low 2010). Even simply identifying metaphor in data sources can be problematic, although scholars now tend to rely on a version of the Pragglejaz Group's (2007: 3) Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP), which determines metaphor to be any lexical unit which has a more basic contemporary meaning when used in other contexts. The other issue that has plagued metaphor research is the difficulty of 'operationalising' (Cameron 1999) metaphor as part of a real-world research methodology. The legacy of Lakoff and Johnson's (1980/2003) groundbreaking *Metaphors We Live By* is that metaphor research can often remain abstract, self-referentially focused on the inner workings of metaphor itself and relying on metaphorical examples plucked at random from scholars' own personal experiences rather than actual usage in the world. As a result, the more contemporary combination of CMT with critical discourse analysis has provided a productive way for researchers to study metaphor deployment

across whole texts or discourses, with a view to exploring whose ideological interests this usage serves (see Koller 2004 for an example).

Godfrey's research focuses on six Ofsted publications: *English 2000-05* (2005), *English at the Crossroads* (2009), *Excellence in English* (2011), *Moving English Forward* (2013), *Research Review Series: English* (2022) and *Telling the Story* (2024). Quantitative analysis of the metaphors utilised across these documents indicates a general shift in usage across the time period. In general, Godfrey highlights how the documents published between 2005 and 2013 contain clusters of metaphors dominated by the notion of non-linearity (flexibility, circularity, dialogue and integration, for example), which are also conceptually linked to metaphors relating to the natural world (health, growth and habitat). These metaphors are very similar to those organic, Romantically-inspired images (Manuel and Carter 2019) favoured by English education researchers working in the progressive tradition (see Gibbons 2017). In contrast, the two most recently published reports are monopolized by metaphors utilising the idea of linearity (processes, sequences, journeys and races), which in turn are linked to metaphors of capital and industry (wealth, transportation, building). These contemporary linear metaphors align with a neoliberal, knowledge-rich form of English that has come to dominate official discourse on the subject since the introduction of the UK National Curriculum of 2014. While this general trend provides much food for thought, the quantitative analysis outlined here, in effect counting the instances of different metaphors in each document, does not tell the whole story and is therefore complemented by qualitative analysis of extended sections of text. The qualitative analysis reveals the way that metaphors can work together in chains, extending and elaborating (Koller 2004: 85–86) upon each other and effectively silencing potential alternatives, to form powerfully coherent representations of subject English.

To demonstrate this, Godfrey focuses on the Ofsted publication *Moving English Forward* (2013), as it occupies an interesting transitional point between the two metaphorical traditions observed. Godfrey explores the beginning and the ending of this document on the basis that these parts of a text can be the most rhetorically significant and often contain evidence of metaphor clustering (Semino 2008: 24). Given this, the first three sentences of the 'Executive summary' of *Moving English Forward* (2013) effectively set up a contrast between two very distinct versions of English:

> There can be no more important subject than English in the school curriculum. English is a pre-eminent world language, it is at the heart of our culture and it is the language medium in which most of our pupils think and communicate. Literacy skills are also crucial to pupils' learning in other subjects across the curriculum.

The second sentence, declaring that English is 'at the *heart* of our culture' (Ofsted 2013: 4, our italics), introduces a natural metaphor of the body reminiscent of those utilised by progressives in their attempt to portray the study of English as

something natural and organic (Smith 2023: 50–51). However, in the sentence immediately following this, all traces of metaphor are removed, and subject English is presented in a narrow, utilitarian way, as instrumental to learning in general. These contrasting views of English can be found, sometimes side-by-side, all the way through *Moving English Forward* (2013).

The 'Executive summary' is also significant for its introduction of metaphors that later become important in the most recent Ofsted documents. In an evaluation of test results at the Early Years Foundation Stage, compared to those at Key Stage 1, it is reported that 'there has … been an improvement in the proportion of children who are *secure* in all aspects of communication, language and literacy at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage'. However, at Key Stage 1, 'too many pupils failed to *secure* the basic reading and writing skills expected at that stage' (2013: 4, our italics). The repeated use of the verb 'secure' is suggestive of the process of construction, whereby each layer must be 'securely' in place before the next is placed on top. This impression, of a building erected stage-by-stage, is reinforced by the use of the phrase 'floor standards' (2013: 5) in the following paragraph. The consecutive nature of construction is key to understanding how the building metaphor in fact elaborates upon the central idea of linearity. English is envisaged as an entity that can be built up sequentially, brick by brick, or perhaps key stage by key stage.

In the same paragraph of the 'Executive summary', Godfrey highlights how the authors also introduce, for the first time, the metaphor of the race, used frequently in *Research Review Series: English* (2022) and *Telling the Story* (2024). In *Moving English Forward* (2013), it is declared that 'surveys suggest that standards have slipped in comparison with our international *competitors*' (2013: 5, our emphasis). In yet another linear metaphor, secondary education, of which English is an important part, has become a global race, with every country striving to get one over on their opponents. Although this commentary on the metaphors of building and racing suggest that *Moving English Forward* (2013) might be viewed as a rather one-sided document, its conclusion offers readers a potentially powerful alternative to the linear conceptualisation of English.

Godfrey's analysis highlights how *Moving English Forward* (2013) ends with a case study of a secondary school which is praised by the Ofsted authors for its exemplary work in improving standards of reading and literacy across the curriculum. This final case study draws frequently on non-linear metaphors and ideas of space and integration: the library is at the '*centre*' of the school's initiatives; there is an '*integration* of activities that *draw together* the English department, the work of the librarian and other *areas* of the curriculum'; the emphasis on reading '*brings together* initiatives'; literacy is allocated a '*central* role'; the 'promotion of reading *extends far beyond* the school library'; 'the school promotes a *wide range* of cross-curricular reading events'; '*links* with performing arts and history are especially strong'; 'these initiatives on reading run *alongside* a well-established whole-school approach to literacy' (2013: 55–56, our italics).

In contrast to the linear movement suggested by the metaphors of construction and racing, the English envisaged here is expansive and multidirectional; different elements and practices are woven together in a more organic, and certainly far less mechanistic way, than is suggested by the building metaphors harnessed at the beginning of the document.

This flexible and discursive English, that seems to productively take up space, is lent considerable rhetorical significance by the sheer number of metaphors that elaborate upon and extend the initial use of spatial language. However, the potential impact of these closing metaphors is attenuated by the swathe of official publications that are quoted in this section. In quick succession, the authors refer to *The Importance of Teaching: Schools White Paper* (DfE, 2010), *Removing Barriers to Literacy* (Ofsted, 2011) and the *Report on the Inquiry Into Overcoming the Barriers to Literacy* (All-Party Parliamentary Group, 2011) (twice), with the case study itself being taken from the *Good Practice Resource - Promoting Reading in a Secondary School* (Ofsted, 2011). This proliferation of references and quotations to external sources, which appear in a far greater number in this section of *Moving English Forward* (2013) compared to earlier Ofsted publications in the triennial series, suggests that, despite the lingering traces of non-linear metaphors to be found in the report, *Moving English Forward* (2013) might actually be seen to represent the moment Progressive English collapses under the weight of a growing tradition of scrutiny and control, seemingly leaving little room for the discursive freedom that was once seen as a hallmark of the discipline.

Godfrey's combination of metaphor analysis with critical discourse analysis allows her to trace the development of key metaphor clusters across significant sections of *Moving English Forward* (2013). Her approach highlights how the 2013 document plays a transitional role in the history of Ofsted's representation of subject English. While the authors of this report utilise many of the non-linear metaphor traditions central to a progressive version of English, these examples are eventually swamped by a proliferation of metaphors and references that portray English as a highly controlled, linear subject. Structurally, these latter metaphors and references appear in positions that lend them powerful rhetorical force. The linear metaphors that start to become more frequent in this document suggest that English comprises easily identifiable and assessable components (think of the foundational reading and writing skills identified above, for example), a vision that conveniently dovetails with the official neoliberal agenda of assessment and accountability.

Godfrey's methodology enables her to conclude that if this report does indeed 'move English forward', it is towards a version of English that, with the recent publication of *Research Review Series: English* (2022) and *Telling the Story* (2024), has almost become 'naturalized' (Fairclough 1995: 35). Without the contrasting presence of non-linear metaphors in these contemporary reports, it is easy to forget that linear English is only one, quite narrow, interpretation of a subject with a long and complex history. While this example clearly focuses on one academic subject,

as it is taught in UK schools, the methodology espoused here could clearly be applied to documents pertaining to any number of subject disciplines, within a range of different contexts and educational jurisdictions.

7.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter we have demonstrated the enormous breadth of the field that we call educational stylistics. In our case studies, we explored studies that highlight this breadth. Of course, where you decide to direct your own attention as a researcher of educational stylistics will depend upon what area of education, and what level of pedagogic discourse (Bernstein 2003) interests you. If you are, or have been, a teacher yourself, you may want to have a direct impact upon classroom practice. Or perhaps you are more interested in students' experience of how an academic subject's curriculum is recontextualised within a particular setting. You may even be fascinated by the policy documents that can shape teacher pedagogy and student behaviour from a position of power and authority. Working within each of these levels of discourse, you may run into issues of access and availability, so before you begin a research project, it is worth asking yourself some questions about how you will generate the data you need: is it actually possible for you to talk to experienced teachers about the kind of resources they use in their classroom? Can you realistically arrange an opportunity to work with students at primary, secondary or the higher education level? Are the kind of policy documents you are interested in researching freely available?

Whichever of the above directions you choose, you will first need a good grounding in the range of stylistic approaches actually available for the researcher in educational stylistics to adopt. Only with this background will you be able to guarantee that you select the right tool for the job at hand. Therefore, before you narrow down your research focus, we would recommend taking a look at some accessible overviews of the various stylistic tools and approaches that we have covered in this chapter, within each of the three case studies.

7.4.1 Further reading

For an introduction to recent research in pedagogical stylistics, you might start with Zyngier and Watson (2022) which spans tertiary and secondary education and includes contributions from researchers working in L1 and L2 contexts. Burke et al. (2012) provides a useful overview of the field in the HE context, while Hall (2015) offers a critical review of the teaching of literature in L1 and L2 classrooms. Mason and Giovanelli (2021) focuses on teaching literature in schools from a cognitive linguistic perspective, and thus is a helpful resource for anyone interested in how pedagogical stylistics connects with cognitive stylistics within education. Although not a study in stylistics, Rosenblatt (1978) is essential reading for anyone interested in reader response theory in education. In relation to

the applications of educational stylistics covered in this chapter, there is a range of research available which you might draw on to develop your understanding of each case study. Cushing (2019) (discussed in this chapter) is worth reading in its entirety for an even more detailed understanding of how you might implement his pedagogical stylistic approach, as is Giovanelli's (2010) application of Text World Theory in the secondary poetry classroom.

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